

BBC

*Collector's Edition*



# RICHARD III

THE FULL STORY  
OF THE KING  
UNDER THE  
CAR PARK



Experts' views on  
the amazing discovery  
of the king's remains



How Richard seized  
the throne



Did he kill the princes  
in the Tower?



Why Shakespeare  
put a spin on his image



The Wars of the Roses  
and rise of the Tudors



The inside story  
of the king's reburial



Richard III's  
continuing legend

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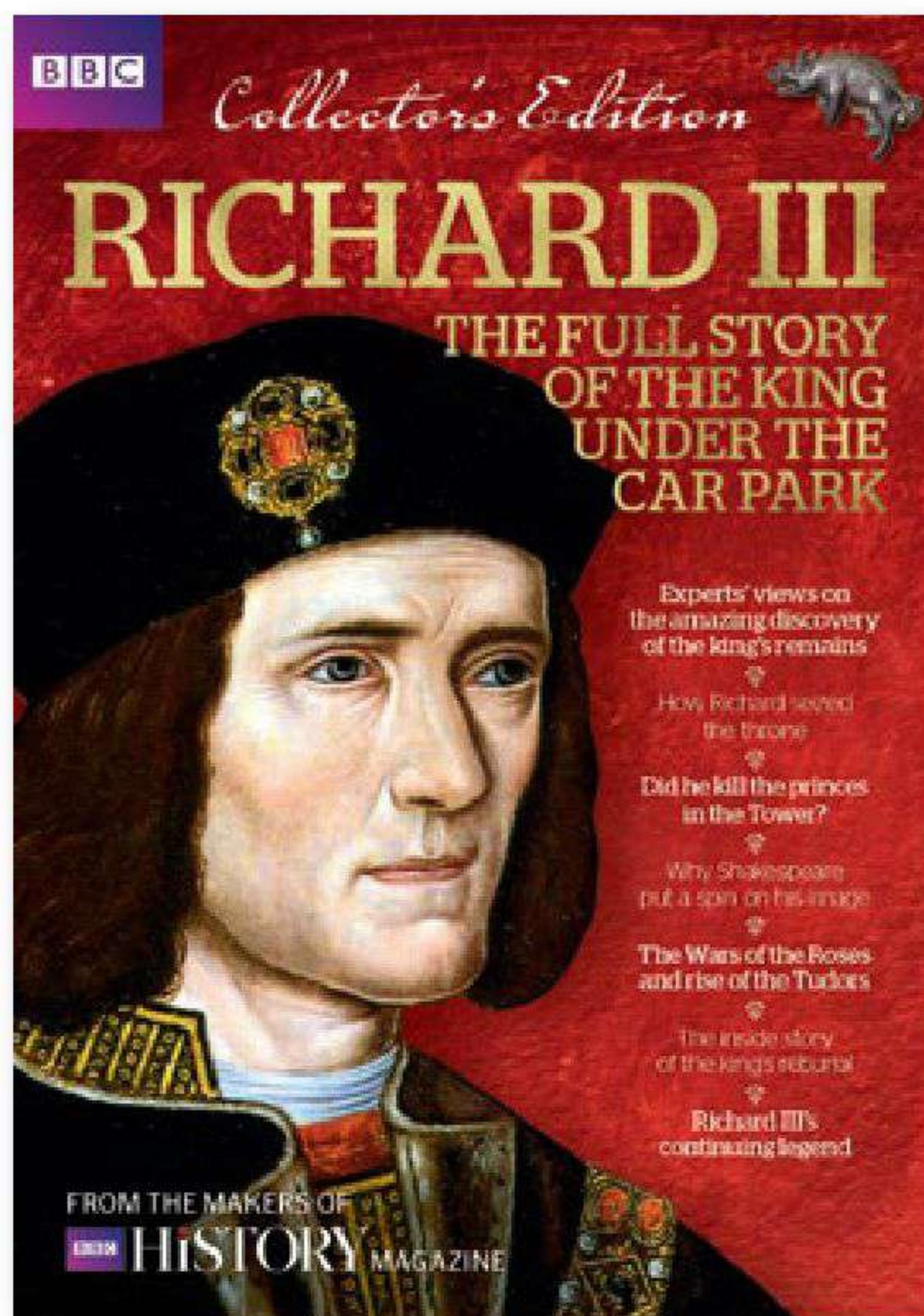
On 26 March, Richard III will be **reburied in Leicester Cathedral**, a little over two years since it was announced that a skeleton discovered beneath a nearby car park was that of the last Plantagenet king. In death, as in life, Richard has continued to cause controversy, including a lively debate – first reported in *BBC History Magazine* – about whether the skeleton even belongs to Richard at all. But, regardless of the identity of the remains, what's undoubtedly true is that the events of the past two years have **brought Richard to the public attention** like never before, rekindling debates about him that have long raged.

In this special edition of the magazine we explore Richard's brief but eventful life and the world in which he lived and died. From the pens of expert historians you will discover the latest theories about the **disappearance of the princes in the Tower** and find out why such a formidable warrior lost his kingdom – and his life – at the **Battle of Bosworth**. You will also get inside the mind of Richard III – a king who liked a joke and a party. Alongside the historical insights, we reflect on Richard's remarkable afterlife in what was the **biggest history news story** of recent times.

Many of the articles that appear here were previously published in *BBC History Magazine*, while several others have been **commissioned especially** for the occasion. Combined, they present a stimulating overview of a king who remains enduringly fascinating today.

**Rob Attar**

*Editor*

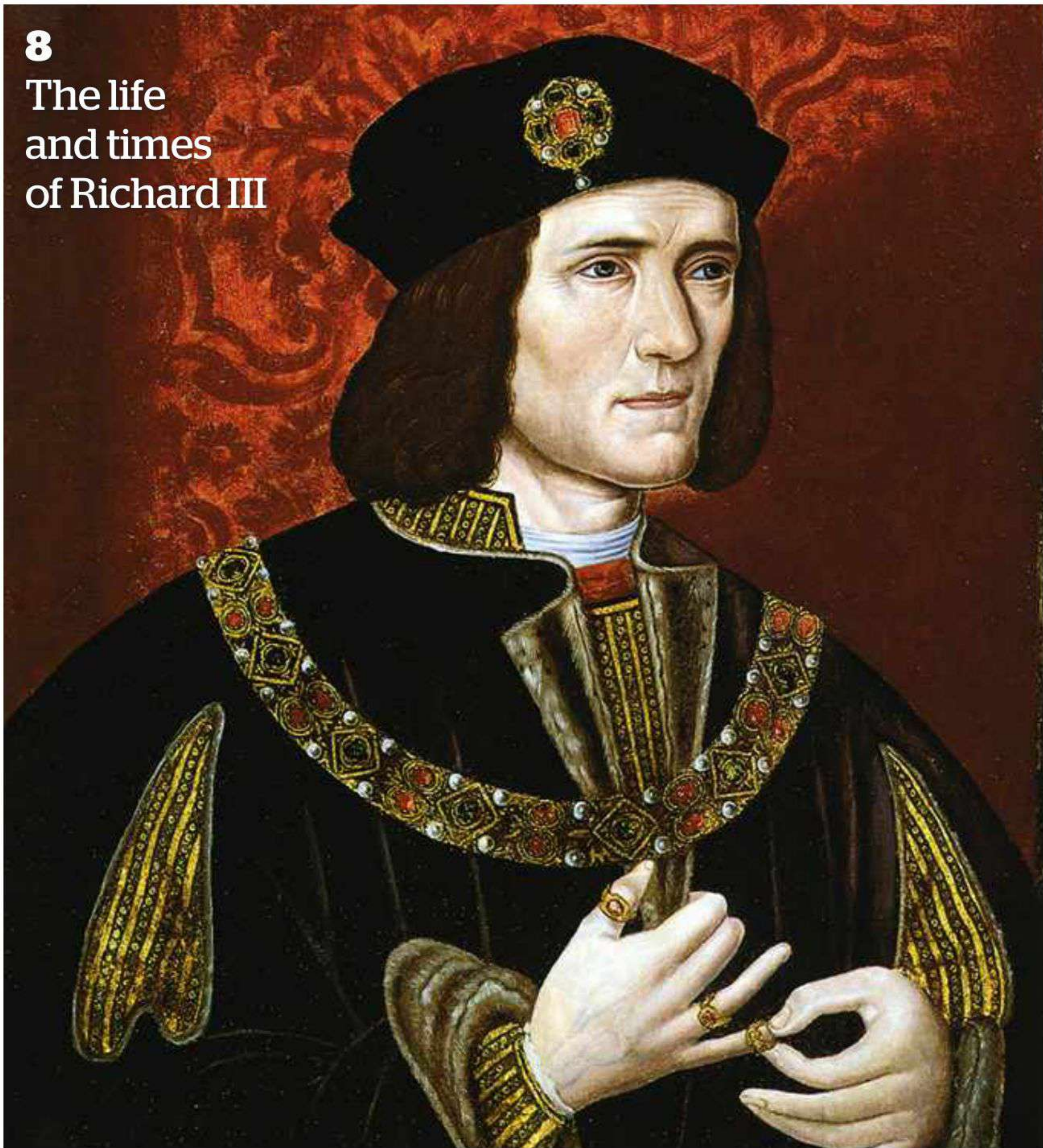


“It's clear that the last Plantagenet king **has always been someone special**. Richard can now rest in peace, but his legend continues”

Historian **DAN JONES** shares his thoughts on Richard III's reburial on page 114



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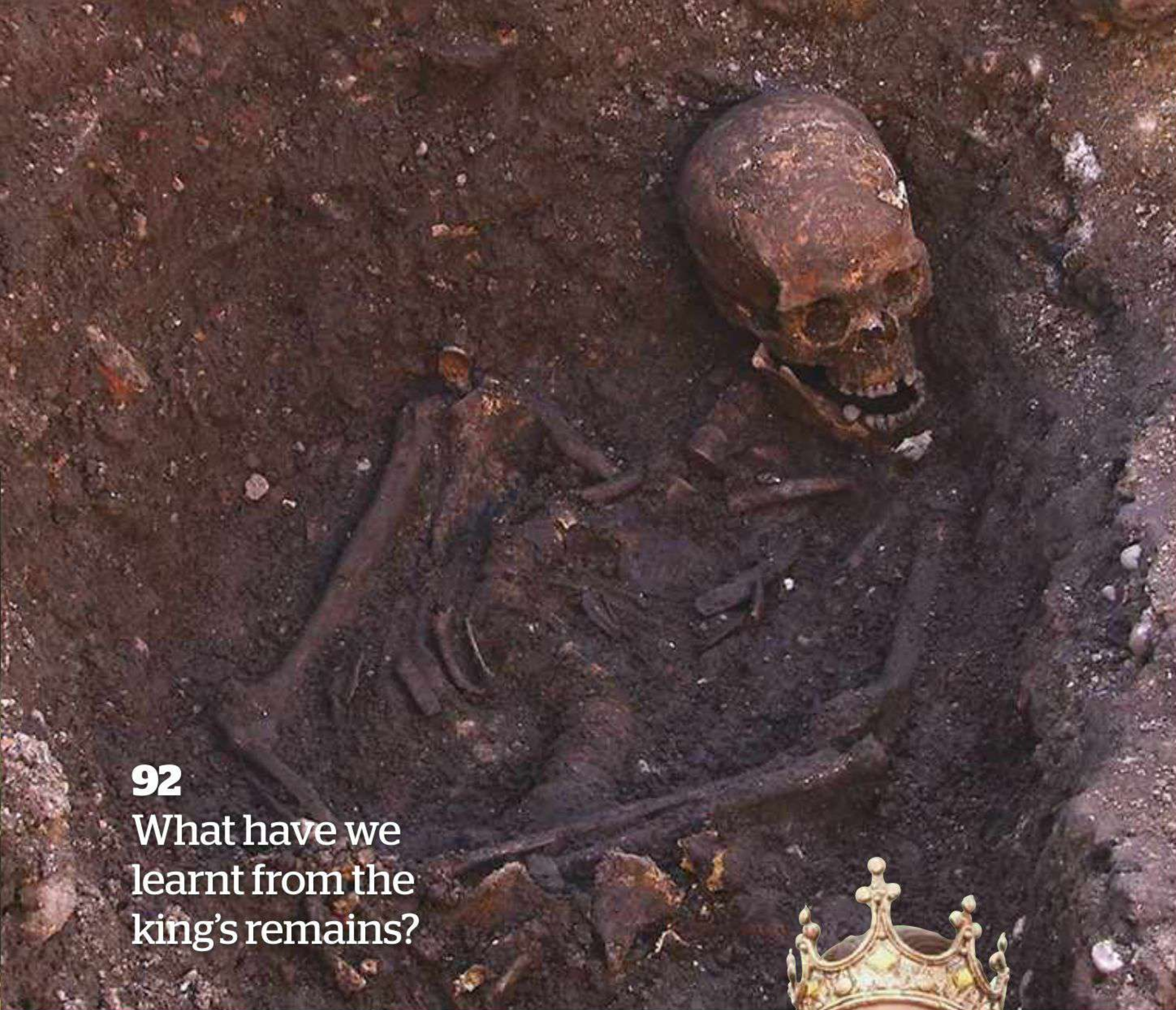
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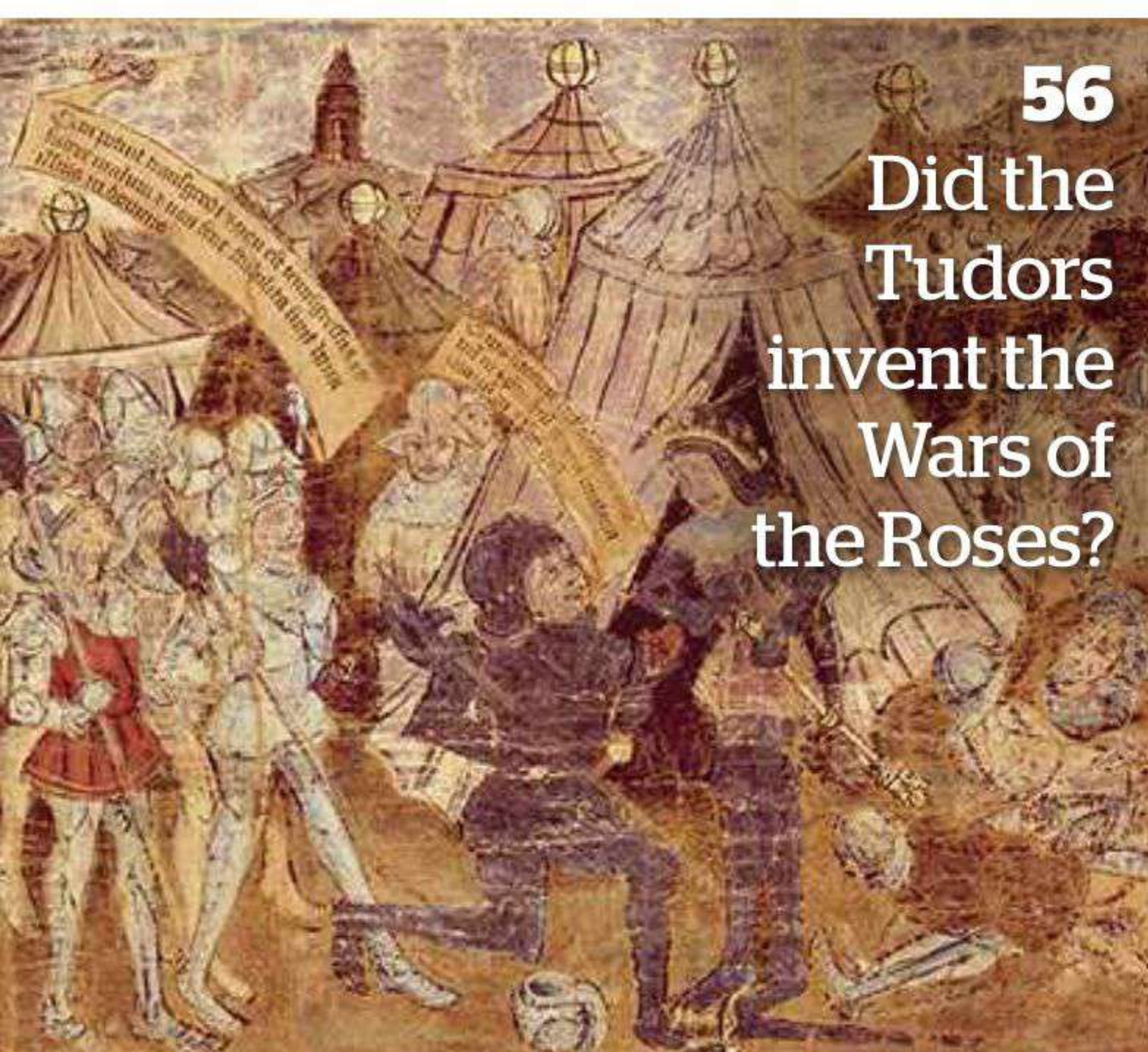
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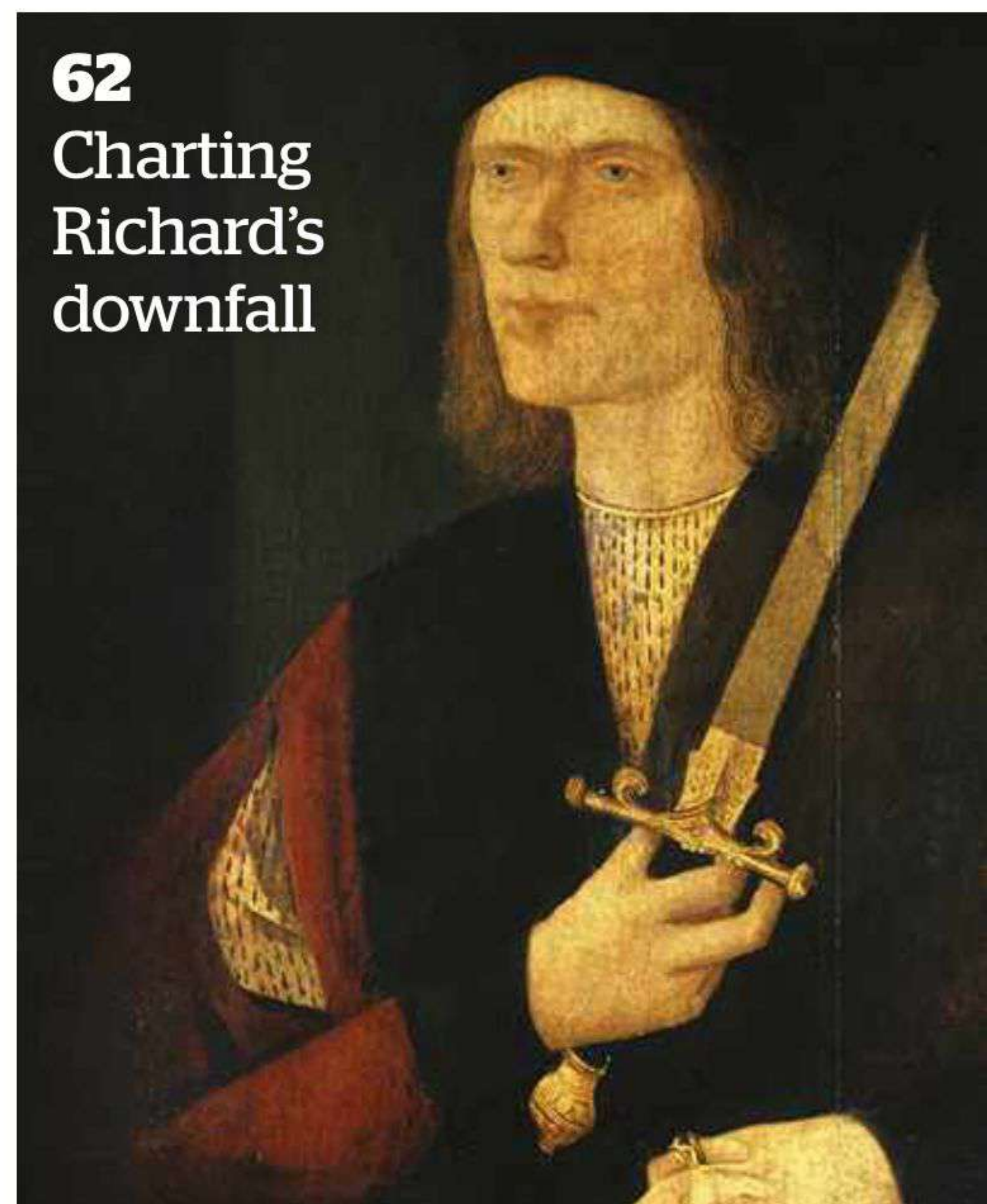
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# LIFE

Party prince, usurper, warrior – Richard III remains a fascinating, often controversial, figure. Here, experts offer their takes on his life and character



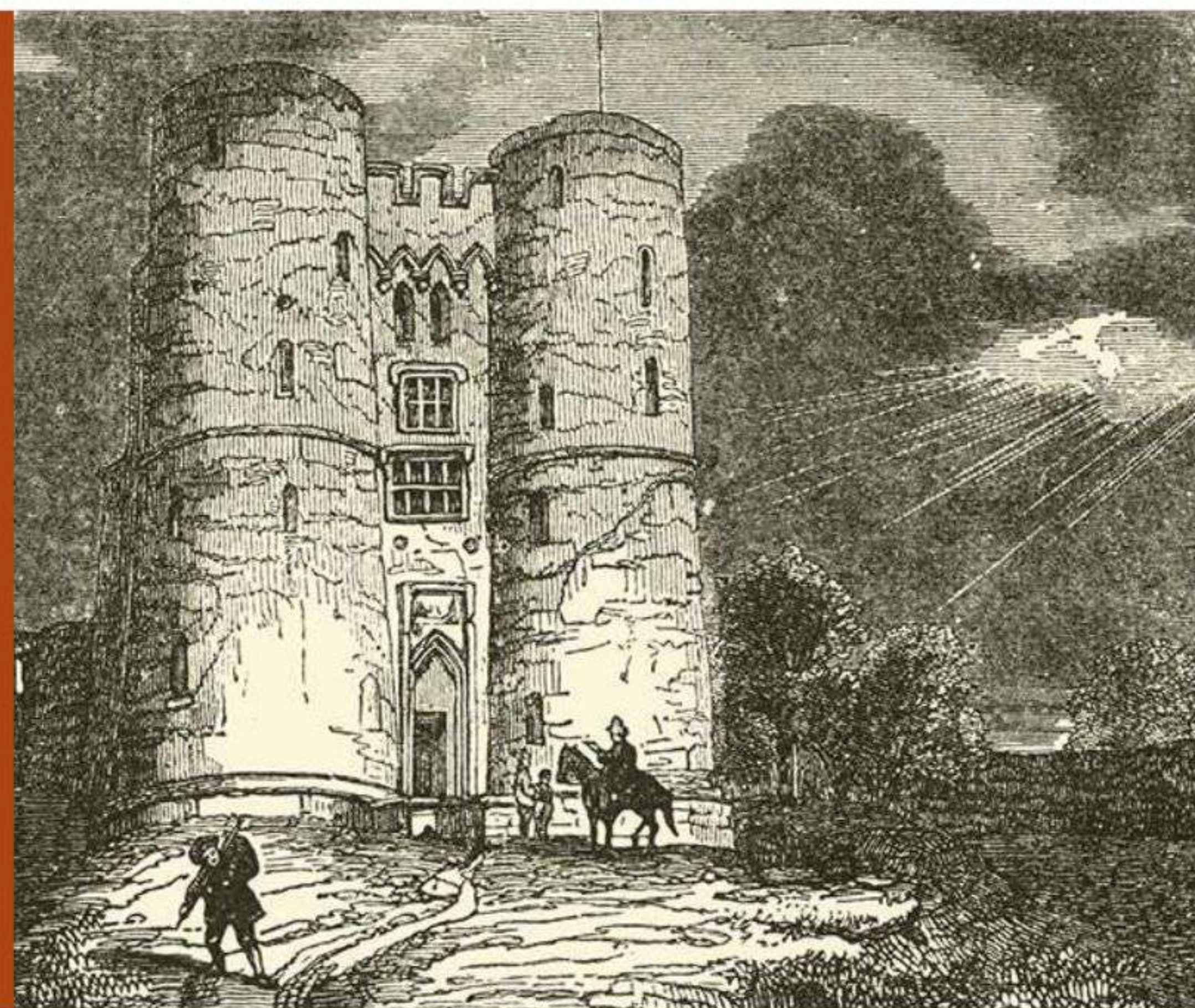
# THE LIFE OF

**Chris Skidmore** traces the key episodes in the rise and fall of

**1452**

2 October

**Richard is born at Fotheringhay Castle in Northamptonshire** (pictured right), 11th child of Richard, Duke of York and Cecily Neville. He later records in his *Book of Hours* that “on this day was born Richard III at Fotheringhay” – third-person confirmation of his exact date of birth. He is delivered by caesarean section, having been in a breach position, or so later rumours suggest. More implausible is John Rous’s description of Richard as being born “with teeth, and hair to his shoulders”. Though both stories are examples of the black legend that will quickly develop around the king after his death, we do know that Cecily, aged 37 at the time, suffered a particularly painful labour. The birth, she later wrote, had been “encumberous” and “to me full painful and uneasy”, causing, she noted, an “infirmity” that was “not hid on my wretched body”.



**1471**

21 May

**Henry VI is found dead, having once more been placed in the Tower of London.** His body is taken for burial at Chertsey Abbey, and it is noted how his coffin ‘bleeds’ on the journey. The official Yorkist version of events describes how Henry dies “of pure displeasure and melancholy” on hearing of the defeat at Tewkesbury – the death of Prince Edward and the capture of Queen Margaret has left the hopes of the Lancastrian dynasty in tatters. However, another chronicler, John Warkworth, is in no doubt that Henry had been “put to death, the twenty-first day of May... between eleven and twelve of the clock, being then at the Tower the Duke of Gloucester, brother to King Edward”. This version has never been proved. Thomas More, notoriously hostile to Richard, could only claim that “as men constantly say” Richard had killed Henry “with his own hands”.

**1471**

4 May

Edward and Richard face the army of Henry VI’s wife, Queen Margaret of Anjou, and her son, Prince Edward, in fields near Tewkesbury Abbey (right). Margaret and her son had landed on the south coast on the day of the battle of Barnet; Edward IV and Richard, learning of the invasion, had marched towards the Lancastrians, at times travelling 36 miles in a single day. **At the battle of Tewkesbury Richard is again successful in destroying the Lancastrian army,** and Prince Edward is killed on the battlefield. The following day, Richard presides over the trial and execution of the Lancastrian commander, the Duke of Somerset, who is dragged out of the abbey after attempting to seek sanctuary there.



**1472**

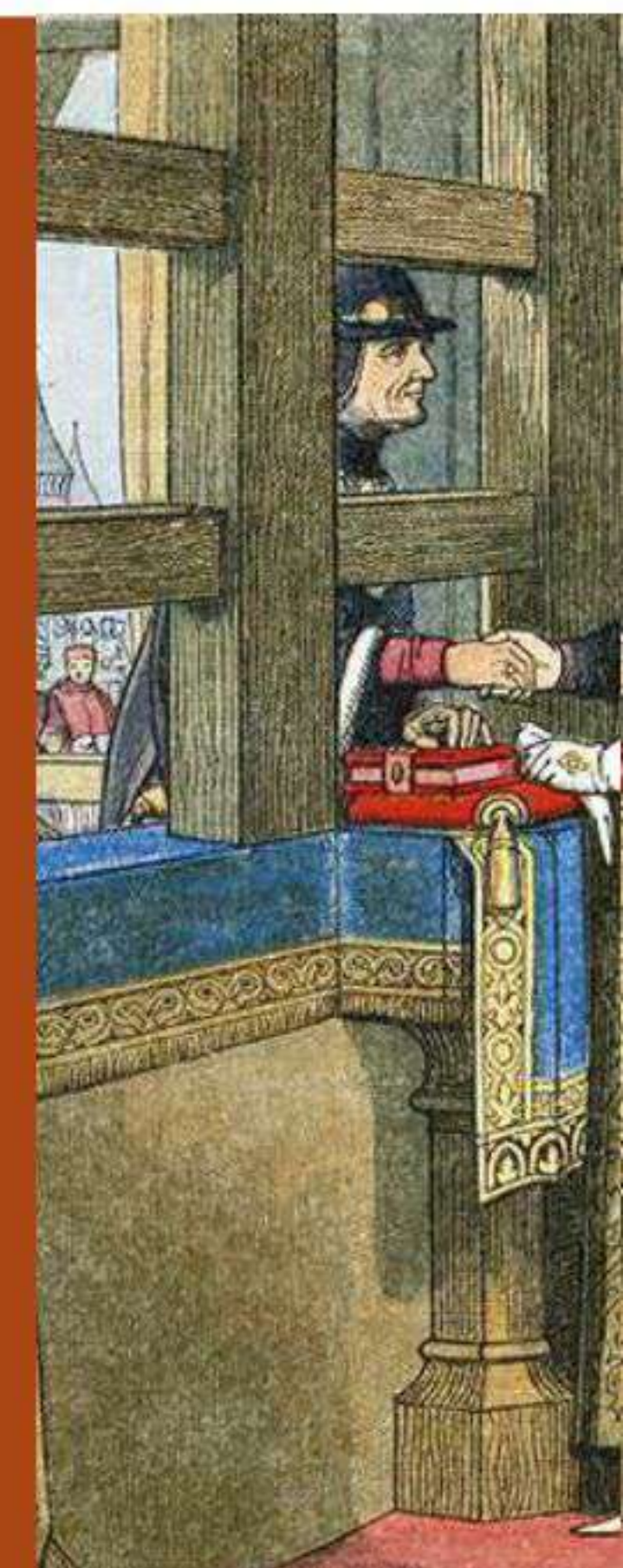
February

Richard is rewarded for his service at Barnet and Tewkesbury with the Earl of Warwick’s estates and offices in the north. Set to replace Warwick as the pre-eminent northern nobleman, Richard wants more: in particular, **he plans to marry Warwick’s daughter, Anne.** This is opposed by Richard’s brother Clarence, who – being married to Warwick’s other daughter – is sole beneficiary of the earl’s inheritance. Richard retrieves Anne from Clarence’s custody and, **despite being her cousin and brother-in-law, quickly marries her.** This sparks a major row between the brothers. Richard wins the dispute, and takes half of Warwick’s possessions.

**1475**

June

Edward decides to raid France, **launching the largest invasion force England has ever mustered.** Richard brings 100 men-at-arms and 1,000 archers to add to Edward’s 15,000 strong army. However, when assistance promised by the Duke of Burgundy fails to materialise, Edward gets cold feet and instead in August chooses to **sign the Treaty of Picquigny with the French king Louis XI** (pictured right), which provides the English king with a substantial annual pension. Richard, who has been hankering after military glory, is “not pleased by the peace” and does not attend the official ceremony. However, Richard does visit the French king shortly afterwards and is happy to receive “very fine presents, including plate and well-equipped horses”.





# RICHARD III

this ambitious, controversial English king

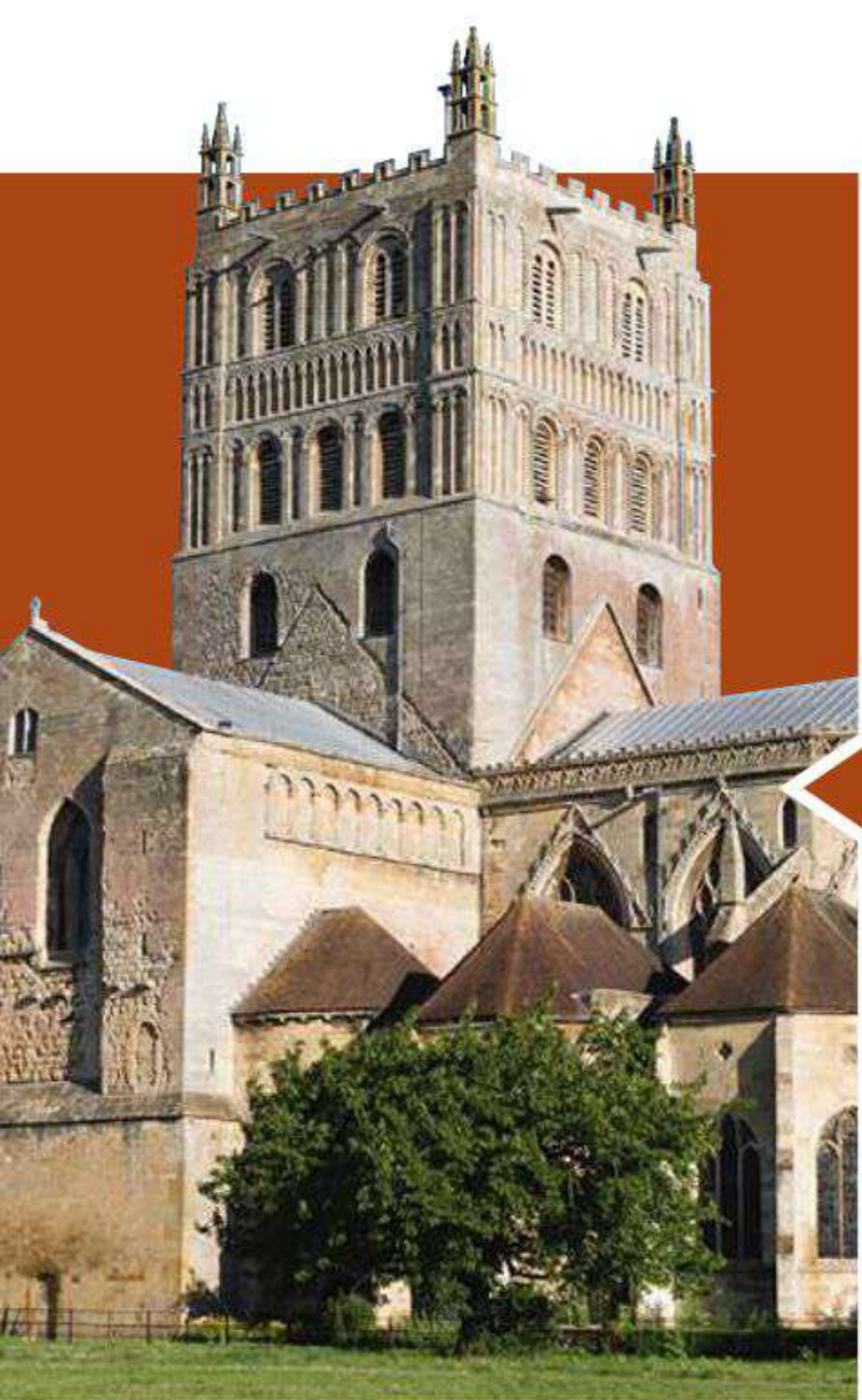
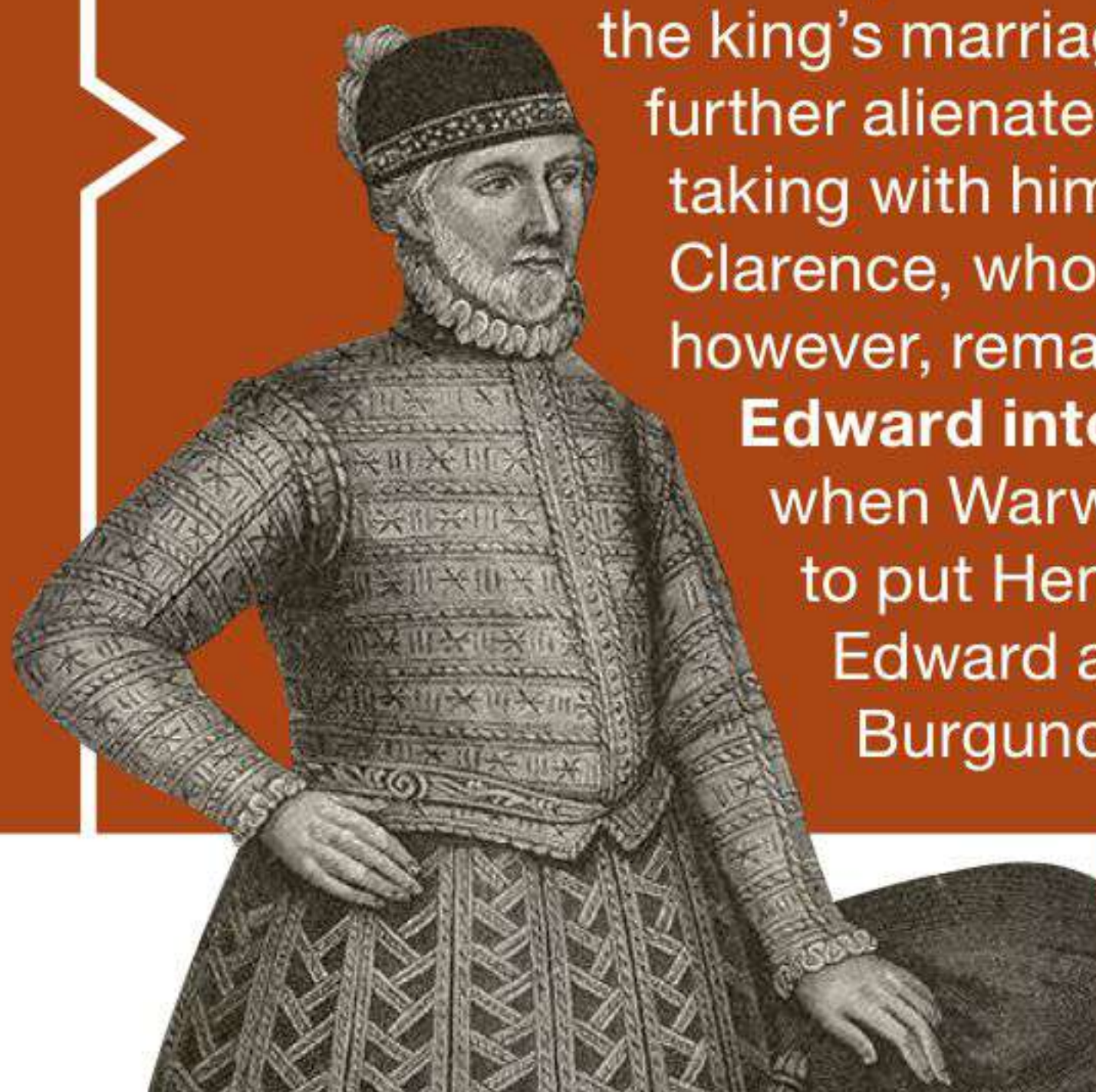
1461

29 March

Richard's brother **Edward** wreaks a devastating victory against the Lancastrian army of **Henry VI** at **Towton** in North Yorkshire, one of the bloodiest battles in English history. The victor claims the throne as **Edward IV**. Richard's youth had been overshadowed by the deteriorating relationship between his father, **Richard**, Duke of York, and **Henry VI**, with violent confrontations ending in the death of York outside Sandal Castle near Wakefield in 1460. After Edward's victory at Towton, though, Richard returns from exile in Burgundy as a royal prince, his status suddenly elevated as the king's brother. Within a year he is created **Duke of Gloucester**.

1460s

Richard spends his adolescence in the household of the **Earl of Warwick**, 'the Kingmaker' (pictured below), who had been instrumental in helping to establish the Yorkist dynasty. Warwick anticipates that the favour will be returned, expecting that his daughters, **Isabel** and **Anne**, will be married to the highest in the land – ideally the king's brothers. Edward disagrees, and the king's marriage to the low-born **Elizabeth Woodville** further alienates Warwick. In 1470, Warwick rebels, taking with him Edward's brother **George**, Duke of **Clarence**, who is by now married to **Isabel**. Richard, however, remains loyal to his brother, following **Edward into exile in the Netherlands** in October when Warwick and Clarence conspire successfully to put **Henry VI** back on the throne. While abroad, Edward and Richard are hosted by the Burgundian nobleman **Louis de Gruuthuse**, whose book collection leaves a lasting impression on both men.



1471

14 April

Edward and Richard clash with Warwick at the **battle of Barnet on Easter Sunday**. They had earlier returned to England to reclaim the kingdom, landing in Yorkshire in March before marching southwards, gathering troops and welcoming their brother **Clarence** back into the Yorkist fold. Richard leads the vanguard of his brother's forces at Barnet, and is wounded in the battle – he is later praised for his bravery. Fighting takes place in a thick fog, resulting in the Lancastrian forces accidentally attacking each other. **Warwick flees the battle on horseback**, but is discovered in a nearby wood and killed (right).



1476

30 July

**Richard, Duke of York** is reburied at **Fotheringhay** after a nine-day procession in a huge, ornate hearse. He had been executed at **Wakefield** in 1460, his head displayed on a spike in **York** and his body placed unceremoniously in a grave at **Pontefract**. **Richard acts as chief mourner**, leading the cortège of the coffins of his father and brother, **Edmund**, Duke of **Rutland**, along with several hundred mourners. The funeral is marked by an elaborate feast for 1,500.



1478

18 February

**The Duke of Clarence** is executed – reputedly drowned in a butt of **Malmsey wine**. Unlike Richard, who is building a reputation as a stalwart of the Yorkist dynasty, Clarence was disenchanted with his own prospects, and seemed again to be flirting with rebellion. In 1477 he was arrested for his involvement in the death of one of his servants. Edward was determined to see his brother punished, and led the treason trial against him. According to one source, Richard is overwhelmed with grief at his brother's death and vows to avenge it. Nevertheless, he is still content to see Clarence's title of **Earl of Salisbury** given to his own son, **Edward of Middleham** (b 1473) three days before Clarence's death.



1482

24 August

**Richard seizes the castle at Berwick from the Scots after a short siege.** War had erupted between England and Scotland during the early 1480s; in 1480, Richard was appointed lieutenant general of the north, leading several border raids. In June 1482, Richard leads a full invasion of Scotland with a force of around 20,000 men. This army devastates surrounding areas as it marches to Edinburgh in a bid to overthrow King James III and install the Duke of Albany as puppet ruler. In the end, Albany backs down. Richard's seizure of Berwick for England is richly rewarded by Edward and remains perhaps his most lasting achievement.

1483

9 April

**Edward IV (right) dies unexpectedly,** leaving the throne to his 12-year-old son, proclaimed Edward V. It is clear that the new king will be led by his Woodville relations, particularly his governor Anthony, Earl Rivers, Elizabeth Woodville's brother. The young king and Rivers depart Ludlow for the coronation, set for 22 June; Richard intercepts them at Stony Stratford on 29 April. Next day, **Richard arrests Rivers and seizes the young king.** Elizabeth flees into sanctuary, and Richard is proclaimed Protector of the Realm.



1484

May

Richard entertains the European nobleman **Nicolas von Poppelau, who leaves the best first-hand account of the king and his court.** For eight days Poppelau dines at the king's table, recording how Richard tells him of wishes to crusade: "With my own people alone and without the help of other princes I should like to drive away not only the Turks, but all my foes." Poppelau describes the king as "three fingers taller than I, but a bit slimmer and not as thickset as I am, and much more lightly built; he had quite slender arms and thighs, and also a great heart," and how he "hardly touched his food, but talked with me all the time".

1484

9 April

**Edward of Middleham, Richard's young son, dies** two months after Richard orders his court to swear a new oath recognising Edward as heir to the throne. The king and his wife, Anne, are stunned. The *Crowland Chronicler* observes that "you might have seen his father and mother in a state almost bordering on madness, by reason of their sudden grief". Richard is without an heir.

1484

January

**Richard's only parliament is finally called,** with the purpose of passing legislation declaring his right to the throne. More than 100 rebels are attainted – their property and titles forfeit – providing a rich supply of patronage to reward the king's northern supporters. Legislation includes xenophobic bills against Italian merchants trading in England, though customs duties on books are abolished, as is the practice of 'benevolences' – forced loans to the king. Bondsmen working on crown lands are also freed.

1484

7 December

**Richard issues a proclamation against Henry Tudor and his followers,** declaiming them as "open murderers, adulterers and extortioners contrary to truth, honour and nature" who would "do the most cruel murders, slaughters, robberies and disinheritances that ever were seen in any Christian realm". Earlier, on Christmas Day 1483, Henry Tudor had sworn that he would take Elizabeth of York as his wife if he successfully invaded England. **Henry won French backing and began to prepare a fleet,** while intrigue in England continued. In December, William Colyngborne, a servant of Richard's mother, was sentenced to be hung, drawn and quartered after being caught lampooning Richard's key advisors.

1485

16 March

**Queen Anne dies after suffering from an illness, possibly tuberculosis.** Rumours circulate that Anne has been poisoned; some add that Richard plans to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York. At Christmas 1484, the *Crowland Chronicler* had noted how "vain changes of apparel ... of similar colour and shape" were presented to Elizabeth as well as Anne. Richard's rumoured plans are condemned by his advisers, who tell him that "if he did not abandon his intended purpose ... all the people of the north, in whom he placed the greatest reliance, would rise in rebellion against him."







1483

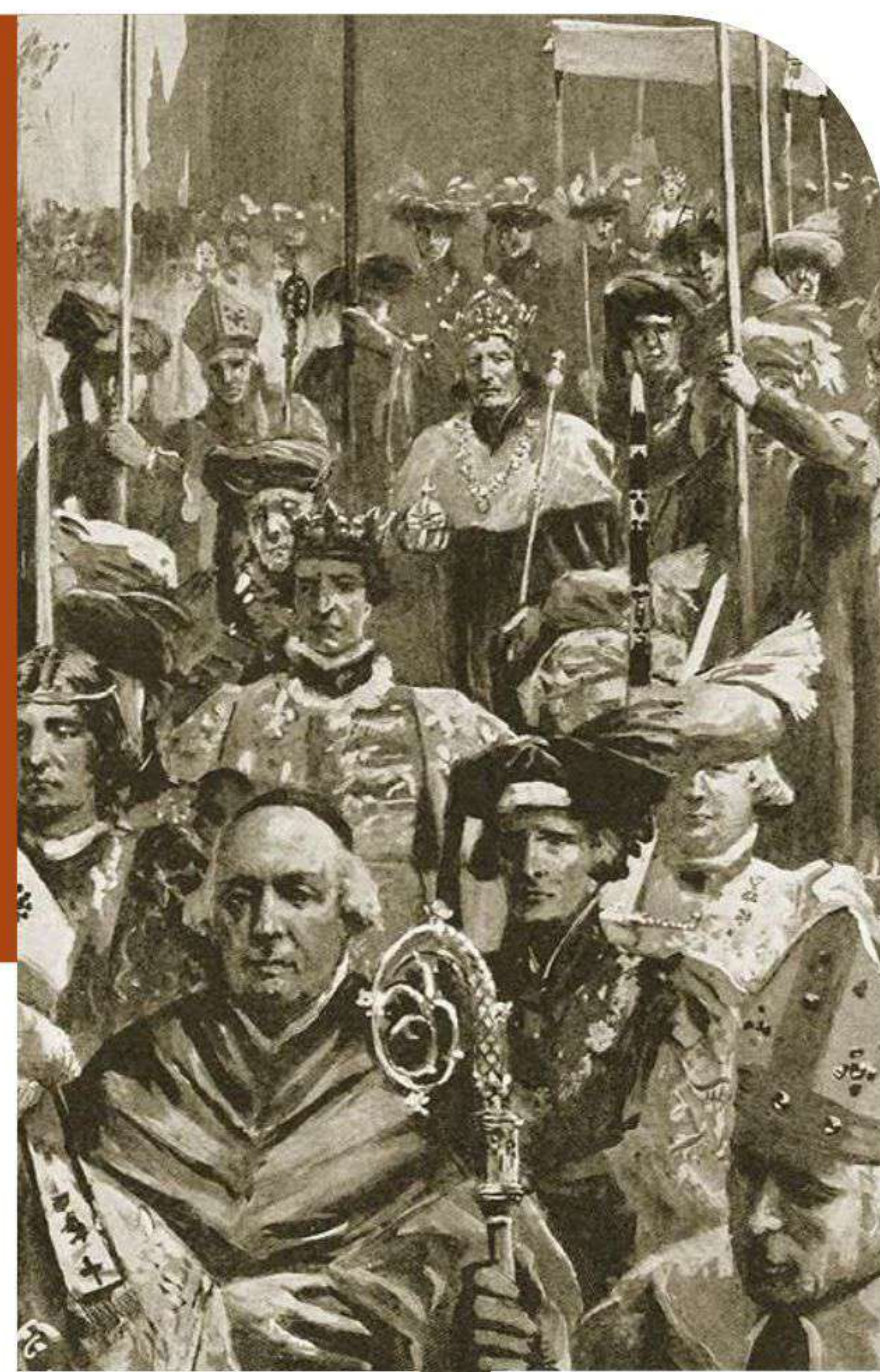
13 June

After a period of seeming stability, Richard calls a council meeting at the Tower of London, where **William, Lord Hastings is accused of conspiracy and beheaded**. Richard is now clearly determined to seize the throne, having detected a conspiracy: on 10 June, he had written to the city of York, asking for support “to aid and assist us against the Queen, her blood adherents and affinity, which have intended and daily doeth intend, to murder and utterly destroy us”. His young nephew Richard, Duke of York, is placed in the Tower, joining Edward V.

1483

26 June

**Richard seizes the throne**, taking his seat in the king’s marble chair at Westminster Hall. The new king (right) bases his claim on a revelation that Edward IV had made a ‘pre-contract’ for marriage with Eleanor Talbot in 1464, thus rendering his subsequent marriage to Elizabeth Woodville illicit and their children illegitimate. **Richard is crowned on 6 July**. Edward V is scrubbed from the records and referred to simply as ‘Edward the Bastard’.



1483

October

**Richard receives news that a huge uprising is being planned** by former household men of Edward IV with the intention of placing Henry Tudor on the throne. Richard is stung by the news that Henry, Duke of Buckingham, a previously loyal supporter, has joined the uprising. Declaring him “the most untrue creature living”, **Richard crushes the rebellion**, while floods prevent Buckingham from raising troops in Wales. Meanwhile, Henry Tudor sails from Brittany in the hope of landing near Plymouth. Forced to turn back, he is soon joined by hundreds of English exiles who flee abroad after the failed rebellion.



1483

29 July

Richard writes that several men have been arrested after an ‘enterprise’ is discovered. According to the chronicler John Stow, this may have been a **failed attempt to free the princes in the Tower**, and ultimately may have sealed their fate. Other sources suggest that the princes (depicted left) were murdered on the advice of the Duke of Buckingham; Thomas More suggests that Richard decided to have them killed while in Warwick during his summer progress. A lack of evidence means that the **fate of Edward V and Richard, Duke of York remains unknown to this day**.



1485

7 August

**Henry Tudor lands 30 ships at the opening of Milford Haven**, a week after setting sail from France. Richard quickly hears news of Tudor’s landing – and is reportedly overjoyed. Believing that he will crush Henry, whose forces number only 2,000 or 3,000 and are dwarfed by the vast army gathered by the king at Nottingham, Richard delays his departure from the city to observe the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary on 15 August.

1485

22 August

Richard’s forces face Henry’s men on a patch of marsh known as ‘Redemore’, south of Market Bosworth. Richard’s army is twice the size of Henry’s but, as fighting begins, it becomes clear the king (on the left of this depiction) does not have the full loyalty of his army. Betrayed by Sir William Stanley, **Richard makes a brave final charge at Henry but is hacked to death**. His body is stripped and taken to Leicester, where it is later buried in the Grey Friars priory.





## THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



Richard II, shown holding court in the late 14th century, was undermined by the lack of a son when Henry Bolingbroke seized his throne. The Plantagenet dynasty's fortunes shaped England's political landscape for over three centuries

# ENGLAND'S ULTIMATE FAMILY DRAMA

Richard III was the final monarch in the remarkable Plantagenet dynasty, which was able to rule England for 331 years at a time when the political landscape could be transformed overnight

**By Robert Bartlett**

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# M

## ONARCHIES ARE NOW RARE IN THE WORLD, numbering around 20 in a system of almost 200 independent states. But for hundreds of years monarchy was the way that politics worked in most countries. And monarchy meant power was in the hands of a family –

a dynasty – and hence politics was family politics. It was not elections that shaped political life, but the births, marriages and deaths of the ruling family. This added further unpredictability to the unpredictable business of ruling.

Between 1154 and 1485, a period of 331 years, England was ruled by one family. Every king during that time was a descendant in the male line of a French count, Geoffrey of Anjou, whose badge, the broom plant – *planta genista* in Latin – is the origin of their name: the Plantagenets.

The Plantagenet dynasty had its origin in the Loire valley, and the first two Plantagenet kings of England, Henry II and Richard the Lionheart, spent much more time in France than in England. This French connection continued throughout the Middle Ages. The body of Henry III lies in Westminster Abbey, but he commanded that after his death his heart should be interred in the Plantagenet family mausoleum of Fontevrault in the Loire valley. Richard II was sometimes called ‘Richard of Bordeaux’ from the place of his birth, while Edward IV was born in Rouen.

Despite these ties with France, the Plantagenets constituted England’s longest-reigning dynasty. It was *their* births, marriages and deaths that shaped the political history of England and much of France. They provide a perfect example of what dynastic rule meant.

Most Plantagenets, like most people in the Middle Ages, died before their 10th birthday. Those who survived – who are the ones we know something about – might live a fair bit longer. The average age at death of the Plantagenet kings was 45. The unlucky ones – such as Edward V, one of the ‘princes in the Tower’ – did not make it to their 13th birthdays. The longest survivor, Edward I, died at the age of 68.

Sudden and unexpected deaths, through violence, like that of Richard I, or from disease, like that of Henry V, could transform the political world overnight. The eventual outcome of both these deaths was the expulsion of the Plantagenets from most of their French possessions.

Long-lived kings presented problems, too. Heirs might get impatient and fractious, while the so-called dotage of Edward III (when he was in his 60s, a relatively youthful age) created serious problems that affected English politics and undermined the Plantagenet war effort in France.

Kings were meant to have sons – but not too many. Given the high rate of infant mortality, it was best if they

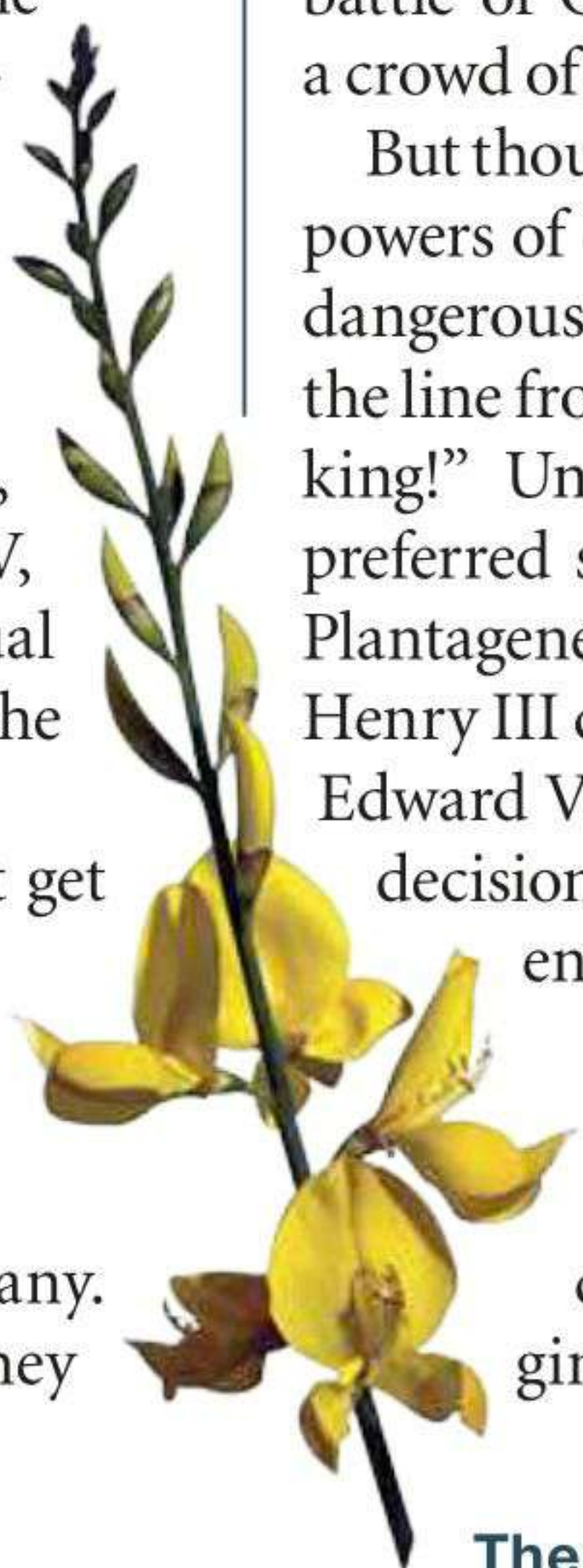
produced numerous children. Edward III and his queen, Philippa, had at least 12 children; nine of these survived infancy, and five of the nine were boys. This ensured that the dynasty would continue in the male line, but it also stored up trouble for the future: there would be many royal descendants ready to make claims if given a chance.

Conversely, kings without sons were vulnerable – get rid of such a king, and there would be no heirs to fight back and pursue revenge. When Henry Bolingbroke usurped the throne from Richard II, he faced opposition, criticism and, sometimes, rebellion, but Richard had no son to fan the flames. In contrast, when Henry VI was removed by Edward IV in 1461, he left a son, and Edward’s regime was not truly secure until the killing of that son, 10 years later. A son (or two) was the safe formula for a medieval king.

These sons became active early. Henry II, the first Plantagenet king, was born the son of a French count but by the time he was 20 he had fought and married his way to being one of the most powerful rulers in Europe. Such an early start was not unusual: this was a world in which teenagers could rule. Henry’s son Richard became Duke of Aquitaine, ruling one-third of France, aged 14. Edward III took control of the government, killing his mother’s lover and sending her into permanent house arrest, when he was 18. His son, the Black Prince, won his spurs at the battle of Crécy, aged 16. Richard II confronted and won over a crowd of armed rebels when he was 14.

But though youthful kings and princes could certainly exercise powers of command effectively, the accession of an infant was a dangerous moment. At this juncture, learned men would quote the line from Ecclesiastes 10, 16: “Woe to the land where a child is king!” Unlike earlier periods, when an adult male was the preferred successor, the rules of succession that applied in the Plantagenet centuries took no account of the age of the heir. Henry III came to the throne aged nine, Richard II aged 10, poor Edward V at the age of 12. This meant regencies, rival factions, decisions about (and by) queen mothers, and, of course, endless negotiations about future brides.

For a dynasty to survive, it had to reproduce. And by the 11th century, in most parts of western Europe, that meant marriage as defined by the church. More casual earlier arrangements had been replaced or marginalised. William the Conqueror’s alternative nickname



The broom plant (*planta genista*), after which England’s most resilient royal family was named



“This was a world in which teenagers could rule. The future Richard I presided over a third of France, aged 14. Edward III took control of England’s government at 18”



**Richard I’s tomb at Fontevault Abbey in the Loire valley, where the Plantagenet dynasty had its roots. Richard, like his father, Henry II, spent far more time in France than in England**

was William the Bastard, but during the Plantagenet centuries illegitimacy was taken seriously as a bar to succession. None of the numerous illegitimate children of the Plantagenets raised a claim. When Richard III decided to take the throne from his nephews, he thought it necessary to undertake an elaborate process to declare them illegitimate. Even if no one believed his arguments, he felt it was a case he had to make: if the princes were not of legitimate birth, they could not be kings.

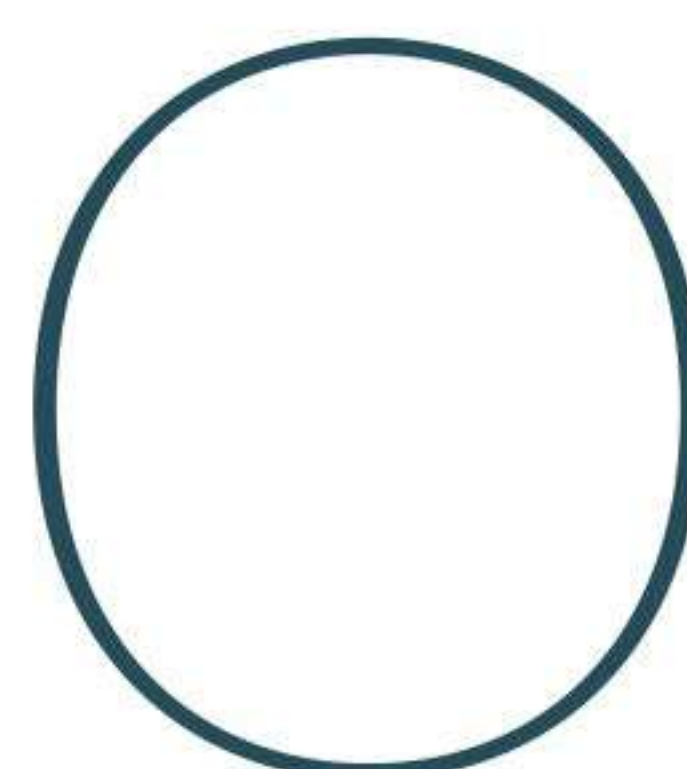
An unusual example of illegitimate children rising high is provided by the offspring of John of Gaunt and his mistress, Katherine Swynford, though they needed the backing of both pope and king to be declared legitimate. Katherine was the daughter of one of the knights of Hainault who had come to England with Philippa of Hainault, queen of Edward III. Katherine had married an English knight but had also been recognised as Gaunt’s mistress.

The high-born ladies of the royal dynasty were not amused when John of Gaunt and Katherine subsequently got married. “We will not go anywhere she is,” they said. “It would be a disgrace if this duchess, who is low born and was his mistress for a long time when he was married before, should have precedence

over us. Our hearts would break with grief, and with good reason.” But the ladies were ignored. The children of Gaunt and Katherine were given the aristocratic-sounding surname Beaufort; they and their descendants were to comprise one of the most important political families in England for the next century. And Margaret Beaufort, Katherine’s great-granddaughter, was the mother of the first of the Tudors, Henry VII.

However, most ruling families used formal marriages as an essential part of their strategy – hence they became a never-ending subject of debate, discussion and disagreement. Marriage was, indeed, one of the preoccupations of this dynastic world. There were always marriage negotiations going on, many leading nowhere. Sometimes this even involved babies being committed to future brides or bridegrooms. Henry ‘the Young King’, son of Henry II, was married at the age of five to the even younger daughter of the king of France. Contemporaries noted with some disapproval this marriage of “little children still wailing in the cradle”, but it brought Henry II the important border territory of the Vexin as the baby princess’s dowry.

Marriages at this social level were about power and property, especially when forging links with other ruling dynasties. For the first three centuries of Plantagenet rule, the queens of England were all foreign, the majority of them French, indicating the central place of France in the Plantagenet world. Indeed, between 1066 and 1464, no English king married an English woman.



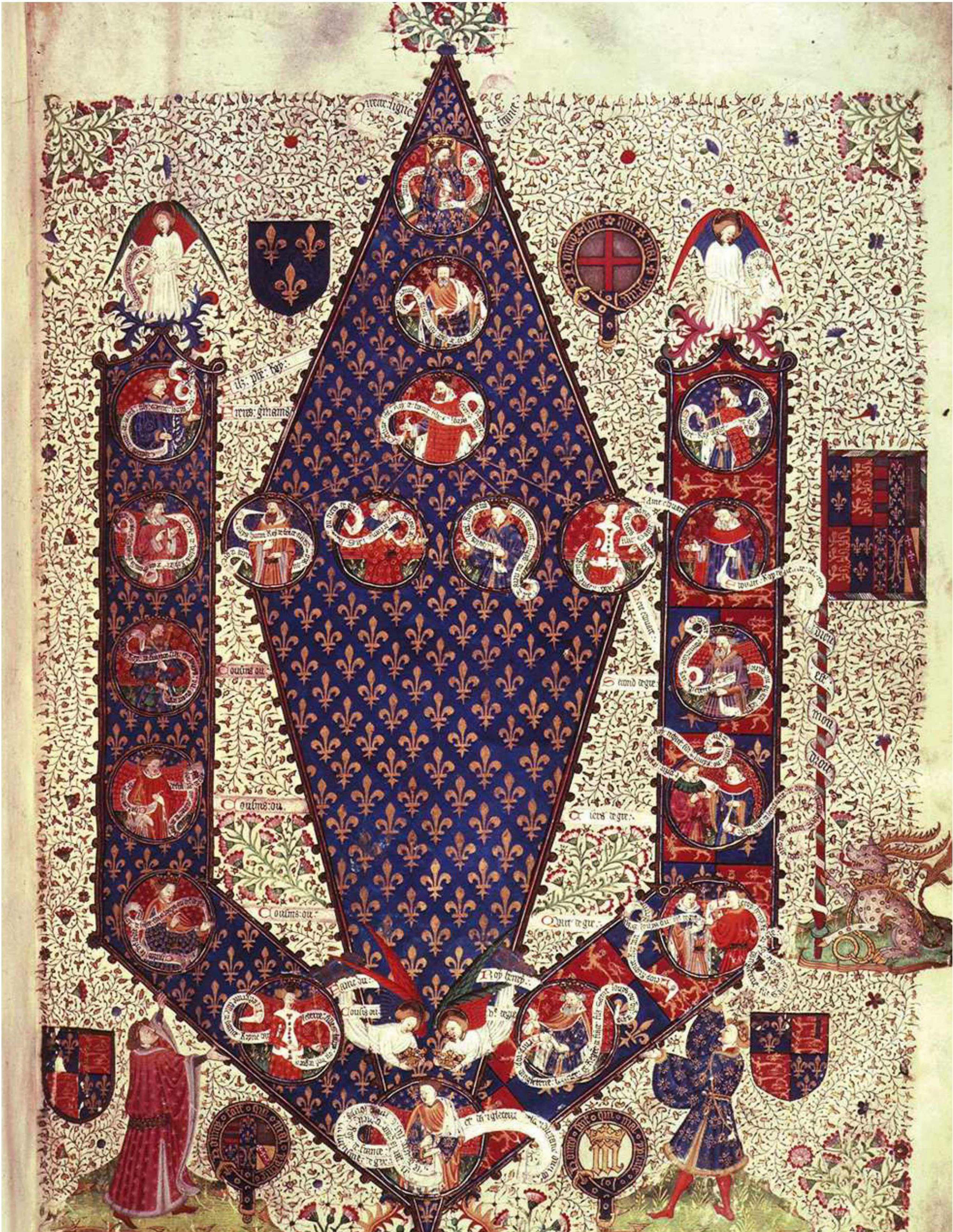
One of the jobs of a queen was to produce children, especially sons. Because men are capable of fathering children at an older age than women are capable of bearing them, it was not uncommon for a king to remarry after the death of his queen. Edward I produced 16 children with his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. He then had three more with his young bride, Margaret of France, when he was in his 60s.

Queens were also meant to be mediators, softening the harsh masculine power of their husbands. A famous example is Philippa of Hainault, wife of Edward III, who pleaded for the lives of the burghers of Calais, six men from the French town whom Edward had ordered to be hanged. A less-well-known example of the same queen’s intercession occurred early in Edward’s reign, when the wooden stands set up for Philippa and her ladies to watch a tournament from collapsed. No one was badly hurt, but the carpenters would have suffered had she not pleaded with her husband for mercy.

Queens were also often fierce champions of the rights of their sons. The Plantagenet dynasty owed the English crown to the determined and persistent efforts of Matilda, daughter of Henry I, who never gave up the fight until her son, the future Henry II, was recognised as heir to the throne. She was never queen, but she kept the title ‘empress’ from her first marriage to the Holy Roman Emperor, and she lived for 13 years after Henry’s accession with the status of the king’s mother.

AKG IMAGES





Henry VI's family tree, shaped as a French lily to signify English kings' claims to the French crown. The Plantagenet period was dominated by war in France



THE **HISTORY** ESSAY

“Edward I produced 16 children with his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. He then had three more with his young bride, Margaret of France, when he was in his 60s”

In the last decades of Plantagenet rule, it was Margaret of Anjou, queen of the disabled Henry VI, who led the struggle for the rights of their son, Edward, Prince of Wales. She was described as “a great and strong laboured woman”. At the low point of their cause, Margaret lobbied persistently for French support, and even agreed to an alliance with the Earl of Warwick, a former chief enemy who had fallen out with the Yorkist side. But the apparent triumph of 1470, when Warwick put Henry VI back on the throne, was followed by the crushing defeat of 1471, the deaths of Warwick, Edward (Prince of Wales) and Henry VI. Margaret was a prisoner but, with the death of her son, no longer had a cause for which to fight.

For the sons who did not succeed to the throne, some kind of provision had to be made. And it could be spectacular. In several cases, the younger sons of the Plantagenet dynasty aimed to win crowns for themselves: John, son of Henry II, was meant to be king of Ireland and was sent a peacock crown – though he had to settle for ‘Lord of Ireland’ instead, a title the kings of England bore down to the time of the Tudors, when it was upgraded to ‘King of Ireland’.



Edward I married Eleanor of Castile, shown in this 14th-century illumination, in her home city of Burgos, now in Spain

Edmund, son of Henry III, was famously proposed as king of Sicily, though the only result of this scheme was an explosion of resentment among the English baronage and the civil war of 1264–65. John of Gaunt, son of Edward III, claimed and fought for the crown of Castile. The only one actually to establish himself on a distant throne, however, was Richard of Cornwall, the younger brother of Henry III, who became ‘King of the Romans’ – which meant Holy Roman Emperor elect – and was crowned in Charlemagne’s old capital of Aachen.

Dynasticism was characterised by ambitions that extended far beyond the boundaries of states. Dynasties looked out for their family interests, not those of a nation or people (insofar as these can be said to have ‘interests’). And the horizons of the Plantagenet dynasty extended well beyond England and France. Richard the Lionheart conquered Cyprus, establishing what was to be the most long-lived of the Crusader states, and Edward I was knighted not in Westminster or Windsor but in Burgos, on the occasion of his marriage to Eleanor of Castile. Edward named one of his sons Alfonso, who was for many years his heir apparent. If Alfonso had not died at the age of 10, Edward I might have been succeeded by Alfonso I – and English naming patterns could have been different to this day, with Alfonso as normal a name as Edward.

In a dynastic world, everything hung on the thread of a vulnerable human life. That life might be wiped away by illness at any time. Or it could be unbalanced, as in the case of Henry VI, whose mental illness came upon him in the summer of 1453. It is sometimes thought that Henry’s madness can be traced to his maternal grandfather, Charles VI of France, but they had very different forms of illness. Charles had remarkable fantasies, such as the belief that he was made of glass and so might break, but Henry simply slumped into a stupor, failing to register even the birth of his only son.

Sudden sickness and madness were part of the uncertainty about the succession – a recurrent anxiety in the dynastic world. Naturally, people sought out methods to diminish that uncertainty and to have guidance for the future. Some of these methods were dangerous, as Eleanor Cobham found out. Eleanor had married Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, brother of Henry V, in 1428. She had already been his mistress for some years and, once he had his first marriage annulled, was able to become his wife. After the death of his older brother, Humphrey was next in line for the throne. If Henry VI died, Humphrey would be king and Eleanor queen.

Eleanor was, perhaps, unwise. She consulted two astrologers to see whether the young king would live and obtained potions from a wise woman to help her conceive – after all, she could be the mother of kings. The astrologers – both of them respectable and learned men – told the duchess that Henry VI would suffer a life-threatening illness in the summer of 1441.

In fact, the events of that summer unfolded very differently. Duke Humphrey had his enemies, as well as his ambitions, and they saw their chance when they heard that his wife had been dabbling in magic and seeking predictions of the king’s illness or

AKG IMAGES



“In the medieval period there were 58 male descendants of Count Geoffrey of Anjou (excluding those who died as babies). Of these, 23 died through violence – 16 of them in the 15th century”



Calais surrenders to Edward III, England's seventh Plantagenet king, in a 15th-century illustration in Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*. Only the intervention of Edward's wife, Philippa of Hainault, prevented him from having the six burghers of the town hanged

death. In July 1441 Eleanor was arrested and tried on charges of necromancy. She admitted that, in order to help her become pregnant, she had obtained potions from 'a wise woman' – a phrase that her accusers would interpret without a doubt as 'a witch'. She was forced to repent her errors. One of Eleanor's astrologers died in the Tower of London, while the other was hanged, drawn and quartered. The 'wise woman' she had consulted was burned alive. Eleanor herself was made to do penance, walking barefoot to the church. She was divorced from Duke Humphrey and spent the remaining 11 years of her life a prisoner in remote and windy castles. She was never the mother of kings.

Another permanent threat was simple physical violence in this complex, brutal world. In the medieval period there were 58 male descendants of Count Geoffrey of Anjou (excluding those who died as babies). Of these, 23 died through violence – 16 of them (almost three-quarters) in the 15th century, the last century of Plantagenet rule.

That century clearly belonged to what the great medievalist Maitland called “the centuries of blood”, coming after an earlier period when the upper classes had been relatively less blood-thirsty in their feuds. This bloodletting marked the end of the Plantagenet dynasty, as Henry Tudor picked up the bloody crown at Bosworth field. But it was certainly not the end of dynastic politics. **H**

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**Robert Bartlett** is Wardlaw professor of mediaeval history at the University of St Andrews. His latest book is *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton UP, 2013)

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOK

► **The Plantagenets: The Kings That Made Britain**  
by Derek Wilson (Quercus, 2011)





# RICHARD GRAB





Richard's reign began when he deposed an innocent king – an act that the nation could never forgive. **Christine Carpenter** explains why this was the turning point of the late 15th century

ILLUSTRATION BY JONTY CLARK

# S THE THRONE



**I**t was all change in the second half of the 15th century: a change of ruling houses, of dynasties. But when was the crucial turning point? Not so long ago, the date generally agreed upon was 1485, when Henry VII won the crown at the Battle of Bosworth and the Tudor dynasty began. This was seen as the point when the modern history of England began, as the struggle between Yorkist and Lancastrian factions in the Wars of the Roses came to an end.

More recently, however, historians have

noted the similarities between the rule of the Yorkists (the dynasty that controlled the country from the accession of Edward IV in 1461 to the death of Richard III in 1485) and that of Henry VII (reigned 1485–1509). It has become clear that the economic, social, religious and cultural history of England from the mid-15th to the early 16th centuries shows considerable continuity.

Another year, 1461 – when the Yorkists came to the throne – has been suggested as the starting point for the new periodisation. However, there was initially no certainty

about the survival of that new dynasty and, since the century ended with a Tudor rather than a Yorkist on the throne, to take 1461 as the key year would be paradoxical.

So what, then, was the key moment when the future of England was defined? We should look at a year between those two. By 1483, the Yorkist dynasty was firmly established and apparently secure – yet in that year the seeds of its destruction two years later were sown. What happened in 1485 was the almost inevitable result of Richard III's usurpation in 1483.

In 1461, Edward of York defeated the forces of the Lancastrian Henry VI and became Edward IV. He had the support of only a small number of the nobility and almost none of the major nobles apart from the Nevilles, the greatest of whom was Richard, Earl of Warwick, 'the Kingmaker'. Indeed, it was not until 1471 that Edward could truly count himself king. That was after he had been briefly replaced by Henry VI in a French-backed rebellion instigated by Warwick, and in which Edward's own brother, the Duke of Clarence, participated. Henry VI, his son, Edward of Lancaster, and Warwick all died in this rebellion, giving Edward a clean slate.

So effective was Edward's rule in what is known as his second reign that, by 1483, his ability to impose his will on the country was possibly greater than that of any king since Edward I (who died in 1307). At its heart were two interlinked forces: a closely knit nobility, among whom his ultra-loyal youngest brother, Richard of Gloucester, the greatest power in the north, was the most prominent; and a powerful household and affinity, led by Lord Hastings, Edward's oldest and truest political ally.

The royal finances and internal order had been restored after the downward spiral under Henry VI, and Edward was far too secure for foreign powers to try to intervene in English affairs. Indeed, in his second reign he pardoned and restored some of

"In 1483, the Yorkist dynasty seemed secure – yet in that year **the seeds of its destruction were sown, in Richard's usurpation**"



Edward of York, depicted in this late 16th-century painting, defeated Lancastrian forces to become king



# Britain in the late 15th century

With Ireland and Wales affected by England's political crisis, Scotland alone enjoyed relative peace

**E**ngland in 1450 was a much-governed country. Kings could raise large sums for war by taxation, took responsibility for law and peacekeeping, and were becoming involved in economic and moral regulation. There was a sizeable and expert central bureaucracy but most government was done by local amateurs, usually gentry, the local nobility playing a large part in co-ordinating their activities.

One effect of the extended period of crisis was to reduce the regional authority of the nobles, putting kings more directly in command of governance in the shires. This is no longer seen as the replacement of a corrupt system of government, loosely referred to as 'bastard feudalism', by something more 'modern'. Instead it is now understood that both direct and indirect rule had strengths and weaknesses.

The European-wide economic depression, caused by plague-induced demographic decline and a bullion shortage, was at its worst in 1450. In England prices and agrarian incomes were low. Towns, after a period of expansion, were mostly in decline, as was international trade. However, late in the century, the cloth trade – representing England's principal export – recovered.

For the lower classes, though, times were good: real wages had risen significantly in town and country, serfdom had virtually disappeared, and land was available cheaply and on good terms. Enterprising yeoman farmers, exploiting the more buoyant parts of the agrarian market, could prosper. And despite the decline, London continued to grow as an economic, political and cultural centre.

Full literacy was the norm among the middling and upper classes, while there



**A medieval stained glass window depicting a worker cutting corn. The late 15th century was good for some yeoman farmers, who benefited from a buoyant agrarian market**

were enough readers among the lower classes for even the illiterate to have access to the written word. Certainly, the English populace was politically well-informed. The religion of the English was conventional, there were very few heretical Lollards, and, from top to bottom of society, gifts were made to religious institutions, most often to the parish church.

Defeat in 1453 ended the Hundred Years' War, despite Edward IV's failed efforts to restart it in 1475. That made it easier to neglect Scotland, France's traditional ally, and political upheavals in England

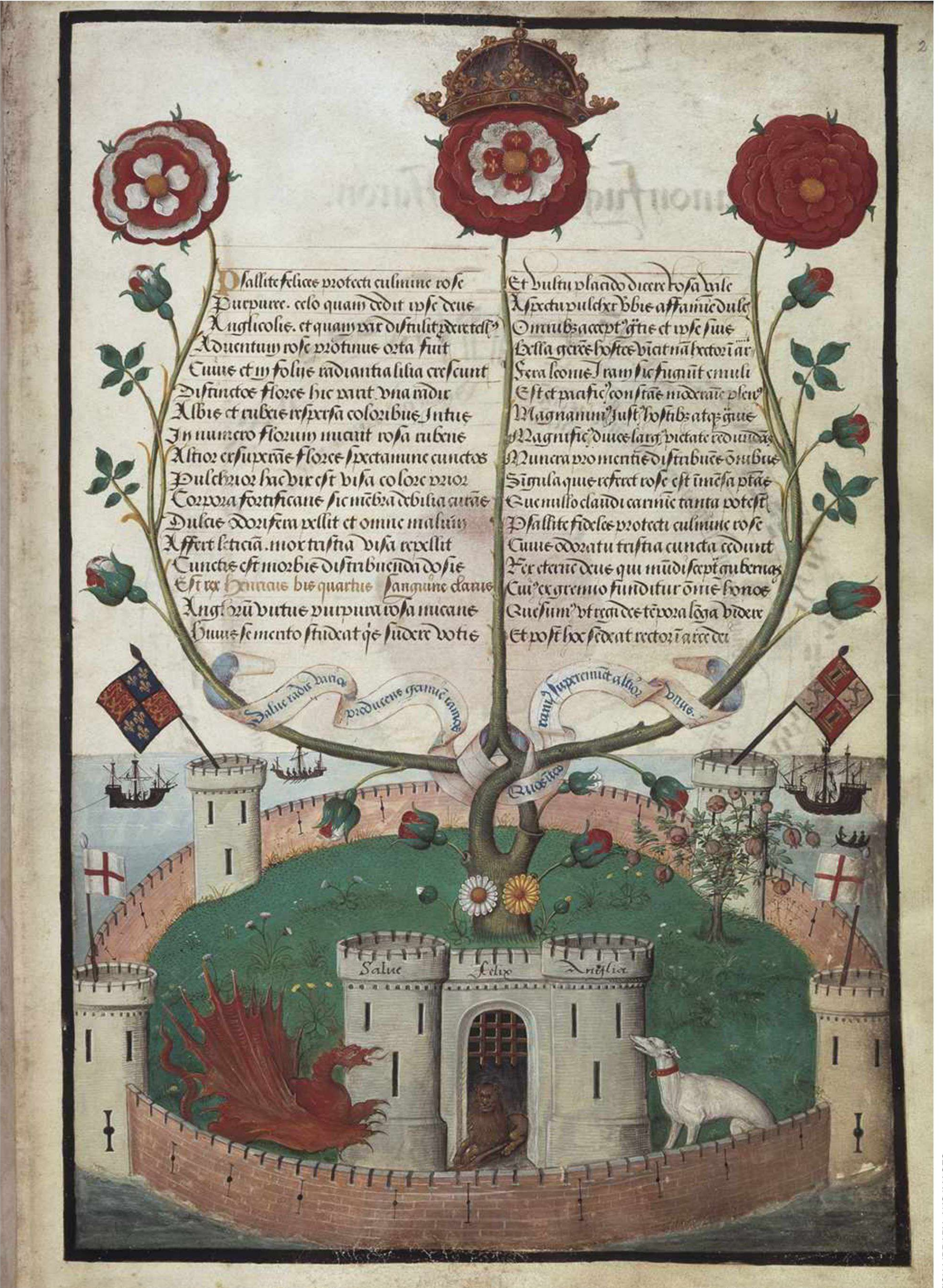
diverted attention away from the British Isles.

By 1450 Wales was becoming anglicised, with its own squirearchy, but the political crisis affected Wales as well as England, and there was a descent into disorder halted only under Edward IV. Much of Ireland was already out of English control but, from the 1470s, Edward and then Henry tried to restore some order, especially in making the remaining core of English settlement, the 'Pale', more secure. This was done by a combination of alliances with great Anglo-Irish nobles such as the Butlers and the

Fitzgeralds, and periodic expeditions from England, the trend being towards greater external intervention.

Perhaps partly because of the absence of English attacks, Scotland in this period was peaceful compared with England – just one king, James III, was violently removed and that was by his son – and kings usually won in confrontations with their nobles. Apart from offering half-hearted support for the Lancastrians in the early 1460s, when dealing with England, Scottish kings in this period generally preferred diplomacy to war.





**BLOSSOMING DYNASTY** A 1486 allegory of England under the Tudor rose, unifying the houses, after Henry VII's victory in 1485



the exiled Lancastrians. Towards the end of the reign Henry Tudor, long exiled in France, was considering relinquishing his claim as the heir of Lancaster and returning to England. The succession seemed secure with Edward's two healthy sons.

### **Too young to be king**

Then, on 9 April Edward died unexpectedly, shortly before his 41st birthday. The age of his heir, Edward V, made it difficult to set up a stable minority government. At 12 he was too young to rule but too close to the age when he might begin to do so. Even so, all would be well as long as the three centres of power could work together. These were the Woodvilles, Edward V's mother's family, who controlled the king's person; Hastings, linchpin of the royal household and political connection; and Gloucester, with his great territorial power.

The young king was living at Ludlow when his father died. As his Woodville relatives brought him to London for his coronation, they were met at Stony Stratford by Richard of Gloucester and his new ally, the duke of Buckingham. There, on 30 April, Edward was forcefully removed from his entourage; some of the Woodvilles were arrested and later executed. Nevertheless, Gloucester continued to work with Hastings, whose control of the royal household gave him enormous power around the king and in the localities, and to prepare for the coronation. But on 13 June Hastings was seized and executed.

Gloucester, who had thus removed opposition – first from Edward V's family, then from the Yorkist political and military establishment – took the throne on 26 June. Richard III, as he now was, justified his usurpation by the need for continuity. However, he had done the hitherto unthinkable – deposing a king who had not just done no wrong but had not been in a position to do anything at all, and who had succeeded a successful king.

Richard's immediate problem was that he was heavily reliant on his closest accomplices, notably Buckingham, and could only keep their support by bribing them with grants. In October, Buckingham, having decided Richard was not giving him enough, rebelled. The core of the rebellion was the Yorkist household. Originally it had acquiesced – probably partly taken by surprise, and partly in the hope of saving the princes. By October, though, there had been time to resolve to resist Richard; in addition, it was probably known by then that the princes were dead.

So rebellion was raised in the name of Henry Tudor and, almost overnight, the

“Richard III was **impelled by panic – seizing the king** because he feared that his vast estate, built on dubious land transactions, would be taken apart”

man who had given up hope of pursuing his claim to the throne became the Yorkist claimant. To enhance his appeal, he promised to marry Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth if he became king. The rebellion failed, though, and a number of Yorkists left England, followed by others as Richard III's short reign progressed.

### **The hated northern interlopers**

In late 1483, as his support outside the north dwindled, Richard embarked on a policy of ‘planting’ his northern supporters throughout the midlands and the south, using lands and offices confiscated from Yorkists. These northern interlopers not only earned him a lot of resentment but also stretched his resources of reliable manpower. It was a vicious circle: as Richard's support diminished, so he became less viable as a king, and more people deserted. By the time of Henry Tudor's invasion and the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, this disbelief and disaffection had spread across much of England, even into Richard's northern stronghold.

Richard might possibly still have won at Bosworth; indeed, Henry was in a position to defeat him only because of what had happened between 1483 and 1485. Moreover, the unease in Richard's forces and late betrayal by some of his supposed allies, both of which contributed to his defeat, are also directly attributable to the diminution of belief in his kingship, stemming from the way he had taken the throne in 1483. If Bosworth was a Lancastrian victory, it was even more the restoration of the Yorkist establishment.

Why Richard acted can never be known. But, since he had shown no previous signs of uncontrollable ambition, it is probable that he was impelled by panic – seizing the king because he feared that the Woodvilles would take apart his vast estate, much of it built

on dubious land transactions; then, once he had attacked them, fearing a Woodville revanche when Edward came of age.

Perhaps, too, having always been the perfect underling to his brother, he found the responsibility of being on his own too much for him. The timing and unexpectedness of Edward IV's death, the vacuum created by the sudden loss of his wide-ranging and very personal authority, and Richard's acute failure of judgement, combined to open the way for the first Tudor to become king – something that, up to that moment, had seemed wildly improbable.

With the Tudors came many things that might not have been otherwise. There was rule that was in many ways no more effective than Edward's but much more obviously disciplinarian towards landowners, especially the nobility. There were implications for Britain. Wales, the Tudors' country of origin, was already much integrated and pacified, and Edward IV had increased the pace of this process. But Scotland remained, and was to remain, a troublesome land for England; it was the marriage of Henry VII's daughter, Margaret, to the king of Scotland that was to lead to the union of the two crowns under James VI & I. Ireland had been much neglected by late medieval kings, who had France, Scotland and sometimes their own survival more in mind. Henry VII initiated the aggressive tactics that his successors followed – not necessarily with beneficial results.

Above all, if there had been no Tudor era and no Henry VIII, would there have been the break from Rome – and everything else that followed? **H**

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**Christine Carpenter** is professor of medieval English history at the University of Cambridge. Her books include *Locality and Polity: A Study of Warwickshire Landed Society, 1401–1499* (Cambridge UP, 1992)

### **DISCOVER MORE**

#### **BOOKS**

- ▶ **The Wars of the Roses: Politics and the Constitution in England c1437–1509** by Christine Carpenter (Cambridge UP, 1997)
- ▶ **Richard III: a Study of Service** by Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge UP, 1991)
- ▶ **Blood and Roses: the Paston family and the Wars of the Roses** by Helen Castor (Faber and Faber, 2005)
- ▶ **A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages** SH Rigby, ed (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008)
- ▶ **An Age of Transition? Economy and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages** by Christopher Dyer (Oxford UP, 2005)





Richard III and Queen Anne shown in the Salisbury Roll – but was their marriage valid by the laws of the day?



# KING OF MORALS or incestuous hypocrite?

Richard III's marriage to Anne Neville helped him gain the throne of England – but was it even legal? **Michael Hicks** explains why that union, and another he planned later, were incestuous

**W**hen Richard III acceded to the throne in 1483, he was married to Anne Neville. Through that union, Richard had been able to resurrect her inheritance and to secure the giant Neville estate – making him lord of the north, the greatest nobleman of his day and powerful enough, in due course, to seize the throne.

It seems that Richard and Anne wed in 1472, when he was 19 and she was 15. She was already a widow, having lost her first husband, Edward of Lancaster, her father, Richard Neville (called Warwick 'the Kingmaker'), and her father-in-law the previous year. Nominally she was a dowager princess, but without property or expectations. To marry a royal duke was the most advantageous match possible for her – it was a most prudent match. But was it valid?

Today, incest means marriage or sexual intercourse with close blood relations. However, medieval church law regarding incest was very strict. It specified various degrees of kinship, from the first to the fourth degree (see the box on page 26 for details), which might be by blood from a common ancestor (consanguinity) or by marriage (affinity). Any marriage under such circumstances could be held void and any issue illegitimate. In Richard's time, the importance of a marriage that was legal and binding had been demonstrated to full effect very recently – it was because King Edward IV had supposedly pledged himself to another (the precontract) that in 1483 his marriage to Queen Elizabeth was held to be void and his children, including the princes in the Tower, were declared illegitimate and ineligible to reign. It was in this way that Richard Duke of Gloucester succeeded to the throne as King Richard III.

The nobility and royalty of the middle ages were constantly intermarrying, so they

had to secure dispensations from the pope to set aside any impediments. Inevitably, Anne and Richard were also close relatives many times over. By blood, they were related once in the fourth degree as third cousins, once in the third degree as second cousins, and once in the second degree as first cousins once removed. Because of Anne's first marriage, they were also related twice in the fourth degree.

Obviously, they needed a dispensation to cover all this. The clerks in the office of the papal penitentiary at Rome authorised thousands of dispensations against impediments in the third and fourth degrees as a matter of routine. But the second degree of consanguinity was more problematic. Richard's elder brother, George Duke of Clarence, was at first refused a dispensation to marry Anne's elder sister Isabel. In 1469 he succeeded. Their union tied Richard and Anne even more closely: twice in the first degree of affinity (see family tree, page 26). Anne was



# The ties that bind: how Anne and Richard were related

## The four prohibited degrees

Richard's brother George was married to Anne's sister Isabel. This meant that Richard and Anne were brother- and sister-in-law twice over, and thus related twice in the **first degree of affinity** (that is, by marriage), the most serious impediment to their own marriage, and one that was unlikely to receive a papal dispensation.

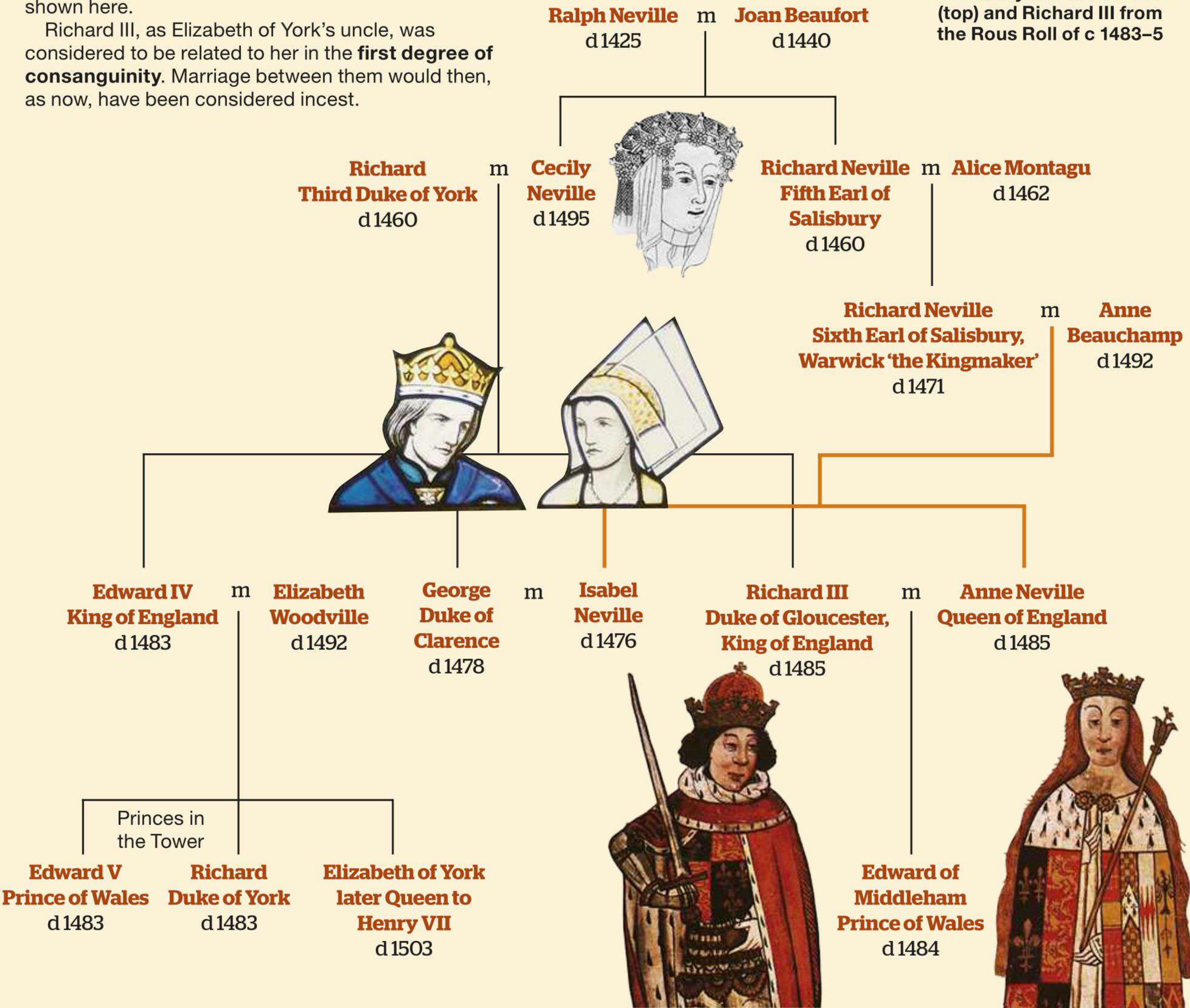
Richard and his brother George were first cousins to Richard Neville, Warwick 'the Kingmaker' (whose father, also Richard Neville, was Cecily Neville's brother) and therefore first cousins once removed to his children Isabel and Anne. As such they were related to them in the **second degree of consanguinity** (blood relationship – meaning they had a common ancestor), though George and Isabel had eventually obtained a papal dispensation to overcome this.

Further, less immediate, relationships between Richard III and Anne (in the **third and fourth degree**, which commonly received papal dispensations) are not shown here.

Richard III, as Elizabeth of York's uncle, was considered to be related to her in the **first degree of consanguinity**. Marriage between them would then, as now, have been considered incest.

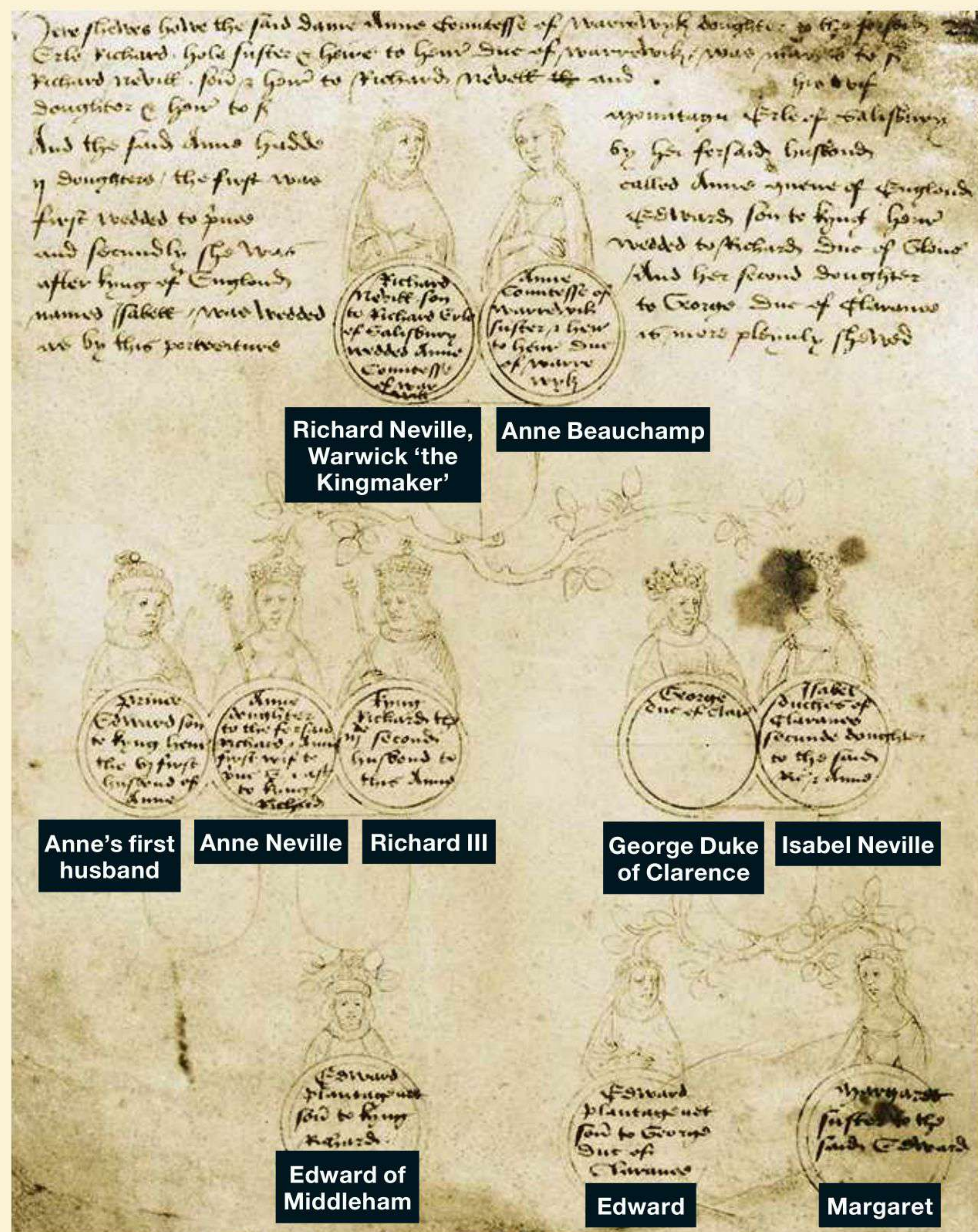


The family shields of Anne (top) and Richard III from the Rous Roll of c 1483–5



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The 15th-century Beauchamp Pageant showing the marriages of Anne and Isabel, the daughters of Richard Neville (Warwick 'the Kingmaker'), to Richard and George – a degree of affinity forbidden by the church

## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

### The complex laws of incest in the medieval period

Today, people are considered to have committed incest if they marry or have sexual intercourse with their closest blood relations: parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces. Medieval marriages differed from our own in many ways. They were contracted more easily, by a simple exchange of vows, without resort to church or registry office. The age of consent (12 for women, 14 for men) was lower – marriages were arranged not infrequently among children – but the law of incest was much stricter.

Church law forbade marriage even between third cousins related by blood from a common ancestor (consanguinity) or by marriage (affinity). The prohibited degrees of kinship

within which marriage was banned were as follows: The fourth degree meant that both parties shared a great-grandparent or a great-grandparent by marriage. Marriage to a second cousin (third degree), to a first cousin (second degree), parent or sibling (first degree) encountered even more serious impediments. Such marriages were invalid and any children resulting were illegitimate and unable to inherit.

Once contracted, however, marriages could not be broken. The only divorce in our modern sense, which allowed the parties to marry again, was where their marriage was null because it had never been valid – because it had contracted within the prohibited degrees or because one party was already married.

**“Richard received a papal dispensation – but it was quite insufficient to validate his marriage to Anne”**

Richard’s sister-in-law – in contemporary parlance, she was his sister. They could not be much more closely related. Richard and Anne could contract a valid marriage and bear legitimate children only with a comprehensive papal dispensation – one that certainly required the personal attention of Pope Sixtus IV and which might well be refused.

### Any just impediment?

We now know that Duke Richard did apply for and secure a dispensation, which doubtless persuaded a clergyman to marry them, and everyone else to accept them as husband and wife. But the dispensation he secured was only to cover two impediments in the fourth degree of affinity. Obviously, therefore, it did not address the major obstacles – the impediments in the third, second and, especially, the first degrees. It was quite insufficient to validate their marriage or to legitimise their children.

Richard cannot have overlooked that Anne was his sister-in-law. Clearly, his first objective was to get married, then perhaps to get their relationship regularised retrospectively – if he could, which was by no means certain. It never was. It follows that Anne Neville was never Richard’s duchess, nor indeed his queen; that his son, Edward of Middleham, was as illegitimate as his acknowledged bastards, John of Pontefract and Katherine Plantagenet; and that young Edward was never qualified to be either Earl of Salisbury or Prince of Wales.

Richard and Clarence were allowed to divide the Warwick inheritance between their wives by two acts of parliament in 1474–5. A provision made in case Richard and Anne were divorced admits that Richard and Anne were not yet validly married. Yet this cannot have been publicly known. Had it been common knowledge, the 1483 denunciation of Edward IV’s marriage as invalid, and hence Richard’s deposition of his brother’s heir, Edward V, as illegitimate, would have recognised as hypocritical and opportunistic. The coronation of Queen Anne and investiture



of Prince Edward would also have been discredited. Neither archbishop, surely, would have been willing to officiate over such charades.

The high moral tone taken by Richard as he condemned the sexual peccadilloes of his brother, Edward IV, and his courtiers, and the bastardy on both sides of his rival Henry Tudor (the future Henry VII), does not sit well with the two bastards of his own that he did acknowledge.

In mitigation, Richard's modern supporters have suggested that both of his own bastards were conceived before his marriage. The fact that Richard lived in sin for 12 years with his supposed spouse, and that his son by that union was also illegitimate, demonstrates that his morality was assumed – merely a ploy to discredit his opponents and win political approval for himself. Anybody swayed by such tactics must surely have been offended by Richard's own illicit and incestuous union in defiance of church law, evidently unregretted, unconfessed, and unabsolved, which he so cleverly concealed from them. Those historians who attacked Richard's character on dubious grounds seem to have selected the wrong charges.

Yet Richard, as we have seen, carried off the pretence, presenting himself as Queen Anne's proper husband at his election, double coronation and first parliament, and at the 1483 investiture of his son Edward of Middleham as Prince of Wales. In February 1484, oaths of allegiance to Prince Edward as heir apparent were extracted from those attending parliament.

But Edward died shortly afterwards. With his son dead, Richard's marriage was less vital, especially if his queen could not supply a replacement. Marriage to Anne, the crucial foundation of his career as duke, now conferred few benefits. Anne had no claim of her own to the throne. Richard's security required a son, which she appeared unlikely to provide, and a consort whose title reinforced his own.



An 1890 illustration of Richard's queen, Anne. When their son Edward died, she ceased to be of use to the king



All of this was recognised by Henry Tudor at Christmas 1483 when he vowed to marry Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York (sister of the princes in the Tower), in order to secure committed support for his claim from Yorkists who had supported her brother, Edward V. To remarry, of course, Richard needed to be single – to be free of his queen. It is no wonder, perhaps, that when Queen Anne briefly languished and conveniently died on 16 March 1485, it was suggested the king had poisoned her. Almost certainly he had not, because he had no need – both because she died naturally, and because her death was not necessary to terminate their marriage.

The key clue is the use of the word 'divorce' by the Crowland Continuator, the best historian of the day, who reports that Richard thought a divorce easily attainable. Obviously, a divorce requires a living wife. The story therefore dates from before Anne's death and terminal illness, probably before February 1485. Crowland did not explain why a divorce was feasible. Almost certainly he did not know – telling testimony, once again, to Richard's success in concealing the shocking truth: surely the chronicler would have explained, had he known the true situation.

But we now know that Richard's marriage was invalid. If he had revealed that he had no adequate dispensation, the marriage would have been denounced by the Church as null and the couple would have been forcibly separated. Richard would then have been free to marry again. In the event, Anne's faltering health rendered such action unnecessary. Richard was able to evade the condemnation of the Church, whatever penance it exacted, and the inevitable public relations disaster that nullification of his marriage would entail.

### No dispensation for incest

Richard aimed to marry again – to marry a woman able to provide him with an heir and, perhaps, to secure foreign support. But his preferred choice posed problems. Both before and after Anne's death, he too seems to have favoured Elizabeth of York. As next sister of the princes in the Tower, she was heir to their claims in the event of their deaths – which, by 1485, were generally believed to have happened.

She could reinforce Richard's claim, but also that of Henry Tudor, who had pledged to marry her. If she married Richard it would be a grievous blow for Tudor, who needed her to enlist the support of committed Yorkists. That she, too, had been bastardised by Edward IV's precontract tellingly illustrates Richard's lack of concern



Edward IV with his wife Elizabeth and their son, who briefly became Edward V before Richard usurped the throne

**“The next marriage Richard planned was to his niece. Apparently incest did not worry him”**

about such matters and his contempt for contemporary moral standards.

A more serious objection was that Elizabeth was his niece – his brother's daughter. To marry her was incest, by the standards of both their day and our own. If it was not specifically forbidden by the Bible in Leviticus, marriage to one's aunt – the same prohibited degree – explicitly was. The only favourable precedent involved the marriage of Thomas Duke of Clarence (died 1421) to his aunt by marriage, an affinal rather than consanguineous relationship. Most canon lawyers held that marriage between such close relations could not be dispensed. There were many other impediments, too, of common descent and of affinity arising from Richard's first marriage.

No wonder 12 doctors of theology told him that such a match was impossible. Richard, it appears, was anxious to proceed – his closest advisers, Catesby and Ratcliffe, knew his intention, Crowland reported. Most probably Richard intended to marry first and seek a dispensation afterwards. He could not afford to wait. What stopped him was, apparently, the political repercussions. Opposition from among his most trusted adherents rendered him circumspect before Anne's death, and forced him to renounce the plan immediately afterwards. He was

obliged to make a public denial at St John's Hall in Clerkenwell – one which, though, was not believed.

As we have seen, by the standards of his day Richard's first marriage was incestuous: he had married his sister. The next marriage he contemplated was to his niece, and that, too, would have been incestuous. Apparently incest did not worry him. Richard meant to commit incest a number of times. Where others were shocked, Richard was seemingly unmoved. For Richard III, the moral code was a means to manipulate the opinions of others. It was not for him to observe himself. **H**

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Michael Hicks is emeritus professor of medieval history at the University of Winchester

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

- ▶ **Anne Neville: Queen to Richard III** by Michael Hicks (The History Press, 2007)
- ▶ **Richard III** by Michael Hicks (The History Press, 2003)
- ▶ **English Royal Marriages and the Papal Penitentiary in the Fifteenth Century** by Peter Clarke (*English Historical Review* Vol 120, No 488, September 2005)







# Inside the mind of Richard

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What made England's most controversial king tick? Was he vain, voluble, a spendthrift? And did he love his wife? **Chris Skidmore**, who has been investigating Richard's secret life for a forthcoming book, reveals all

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY JONTY CLARK



# Richard liked the finer things in life

Details that survive from Richard's court suggest that the king was no po-faced ascetic but a spendthrift who enjoyed life's luxuries.

Richard had his own troupe of players and minstrels, while he ordered that one of Edward V's own servants be retained, for "his expert ability and cunning in the science of music," ordering that he "take and seize for us and in our name all such singing men and children".

Richard also seems to have appreciated good fashion. In 1484 he sent the Irish Earl of Desmond a parcel including gowns of velvet and cloth of gold "to show unto you... our intent and pleasure for to have you to use the manner of our English habit and clothing".

The king's extravagance excited comment from the most unlikely of sources. Thomas Langton – who served as bishop of St David's, Salisbury and Winchester – praised the king in a letter written shortly after his accession to the throne in the summer of 1483, describing how "he contents the people where he goes best that ever did prince... on my troth I liked never the conditions of any prince so well as his: God hath sent him to us for the weal of us all." However, in the final line, the bishop added a note of caution: "Sensual pleasure holds sway to an increasing extent, but I do not consider that this detracts from what I have said."

# He was generous (when the mood took him)

The *Crowland Chronicle* – written in Lincolnshire's Crowland Abbey from the 7th to 15th centuries – describes how Richard intended to "pass over the pomp of Christmas" in 1483. Yet this terse assessment contradicts surviving contemporary records, which tell us that the king spent £764 17s 6d (the equivalent of over £380,000 today) for "certain plate... for our year's gifts against Christmas last past and for other jewels", while he gave £100 (£50,000) to "our welbeloved servants the grooms and pages of our chamber... for a reward against the Feast of Christmas".

At a Whitehall banquet to mark the epiphany celebrations of 6 January 1484, Richard gave the mayor and aldermen of London a gold cup "garnished with pearls and other precious

stones" to be used in the chamber of the Guildhall. These were displayed at a council meeting a week later, where it was also declared how Richard "for the very great favour he bears towards this city, intended to bestow and make the borough of Southwark part of the liberty of the City, and also to give £10,000 (£5m) towards the building of walls and ditches around the said borough".

Intriguingly, this huge financial gift never materialised – and the aldermen of London failed to raise the matter again. Did the evening's festivities inspire Richard to make this magnanimous gesture – only to conveniently forget about it in the cold light of day?





## He regarded himself as a man of York

The dispute over where Richard's remains should be interred made it all the way to the high court. But can contemporary sources shed any light on where the king himself wished to be buried?

Perhaps they can. Though the king is known to have supported several religious institutions – including St George's Chapel at Windsor, and his own foundations at Middleham in Yorkshire and Queen's College, Cambridge – he does seem to have placed particular emphasis on his relationship with York and its famous Minster.

In one document, Richard described the “great zeal and tender affection that we bear in our heart unto our faithful and true subjects the mayor, sheriffs and citizens of the city of York”.

Shortly after his coronation, he travelled north to the city, holding a spectacular ceremony in the Minster, to which he donated a “great cross standing on six bases... with images of the crucifixion and the two thieves, together with other images near the foot and many precious stones, rubies and sapphires”.

Richard's greatest display of affection to the city came on 23 September 1484, when he unveiled plans for a chantry foundation at York Minster, which would house a hundred priests to support the Minster and practise the “worship of God, our Lady, Saint George and Saint Ninian”. The massive project involved the construction of six altars for the king's chaplains, together with a separate building to house them.

Several months after his original grant, however, Richard was forced to write a letter to the authorities of the Duchy of Lancaster. Unpublished and unremarked upon by historians who have written on Richard's plans for a foundation at York, the letter states that, in spite of giving to

the dean of the Minster and its authorities “our special power and authority to ask, gather and levy all and any sum of money for the time” in order to “sustain and bear the charge of the finding of a hundred priests now being of our foundation,” the priests still remained unpaid for their services.

Richard now demanded that they be paid from the Duchy of Lancaster. “We not willing our said priests to be unpaid of their wages, seeing by their prayers we trust to be made the more acceptable to God and his saints.”

The connection between Richard's establishment of the foundation at York and the salvation of his own soul could hardly be any clearer. Could this indicate that Richard's real intention in creating this new religious institution was to follow the growing trend for 15th-century aristocrats across Europe to establish their own chantry foundations and, ultimately, mausoleums? Richard, Duke of York, had done just that at Fotheringay in Northamptonshire, and Edward IV followed suit at Windsor.

After Richard's death, the archbishop of York remembered fondly how “our most Christian prince, King Richard III... founded and ordained a most celebrated college of a hundred chaplains, primarily at his own expense.” The foundation was not to last long, however. By 1493, “timber from the house constructed by King Richard III from the establishing of chantry priests” had been broken up and sold.

## He loved his wife (at least, that's what he claimed)

Unlike his brother Edward IV, who was famed for his debauchery and mistresses, Richard seems to have been a devout family man. He was fond of his only legitimate son, Edward, whom he described as “our dearest first born son Edward, whose outstanding qualities, with which he is singularly endowed for his age, give great and, by the favour of God, undoubted hope of future uprightness”.

Edward's premature death in April 1484 proved devastating to both Richard and his wife, Anne. The news clearly came unexpectedly, for, according to the *Crowland Chronicle*, “on hearing news of this, at Nottingham, where they were then residing, you might have seen his father and mother in a state almost bordering on madness, by reason of their sudden grief”.

Several months later, in September 1484, when wrapping up payments for the prince's disbanded household, Richard continued to describe Edward as “our dearest son the prince”. When Anne herself died on 16 March 1485, rumours swirled that Richard had planned to poison his wife (see page 29 for reasons why this is unlikely). Yet the records show a very different side to the king who, just days before her death, referred to her as “our most dear wife the queen”.

The king professed in his proclamations his distaste of “horrible adultery and bawds, provoking the high indignation and displeasure of God”, instead preferring “the way of truth and virtue”. He even declared to his bishops that “our principal intent and fervent desire is to see virtue and cleanness of living to be advanced, increased and multiplied, and vices and all other things repugnant to virtue... to be repressed and annulled.”

Yet this did not prevent Richard himself from fathering at least two illegitimate children. One was John of Gloucester, whom Richard evidently thought highly of, appointing him captain of Calais, on account of his “liveliness of mind, activity of body and inclination to all good customs”. The other was Katherine Plantagenet; Richard married her off to William, Earl of Huntingdon, making a generous financial provision to the couple.



When Anne died, rumours swirled that Richard had **planned to poison her**. Yet just days before her death he referred to her as ‘**our most dear wife** the queen’





## He was convinced of his right to rule

Upon the birth of Edward IV's eldest son, Edward, in 1470, Richard had sworn publicly that the young baby, "first begotten son of our sovereign lord", was "to be very and undoubted heir to our said lord as to the crowns and realms of England and France and lordship of Ireland... In case hereafter it happen you by God's disposition to overlive our sovereign lord; I shall then take and accept you for the very true and rightwise king of England."

Richard was, of course, to break this solemn vow in spectacular style – but how did he justify going back on his word to himself and his peers? The archives provide some clues.

According to a lengthy explanation set down in parliament in 1484, Richard proved that Edward IV had already been contracted to marry Lady Eleanor Talbot before his union with Queen Elizabeth Woodville. As a result, his son Edward V was in fact illegitimate, so unable to take the throne. Two days after he had seized the crown, Richard wrote how men had wrongly sworn an oath to Edward V that had been "ignorantly given".

In early January 1484, Richard had no qualms in repaying a Cambridgeshire bailiff for wildfowl purchased for Edward V's aborted coronation, merely describing the planned ceremony as "the time we stood protector of this our realm while Edward bastard son unto our entirely beloved brother Edward IV was called king of this realm".

In another document in the archives, Richard merely described how he was now the "true and undoubted king of this realm of England by divine and human right," having "taken the royal dignity and power and the rule and governance of the same realm for himself... from Edward the Bastard, formerly called Edward the fifth... the same Edward legitimately having been removed by usurpation". It seems that Richard, for one, was absolutely convinced of his right to rule.

## He was a formidable warrior

The records reveal that Richard had begun his military training at an early age. In March 1465, his brother Edward IV spent over £20 (£10,000) for "sheaves of arrows" and bows, "to the use of our brethren the dukes of Clarence and Gloucester".

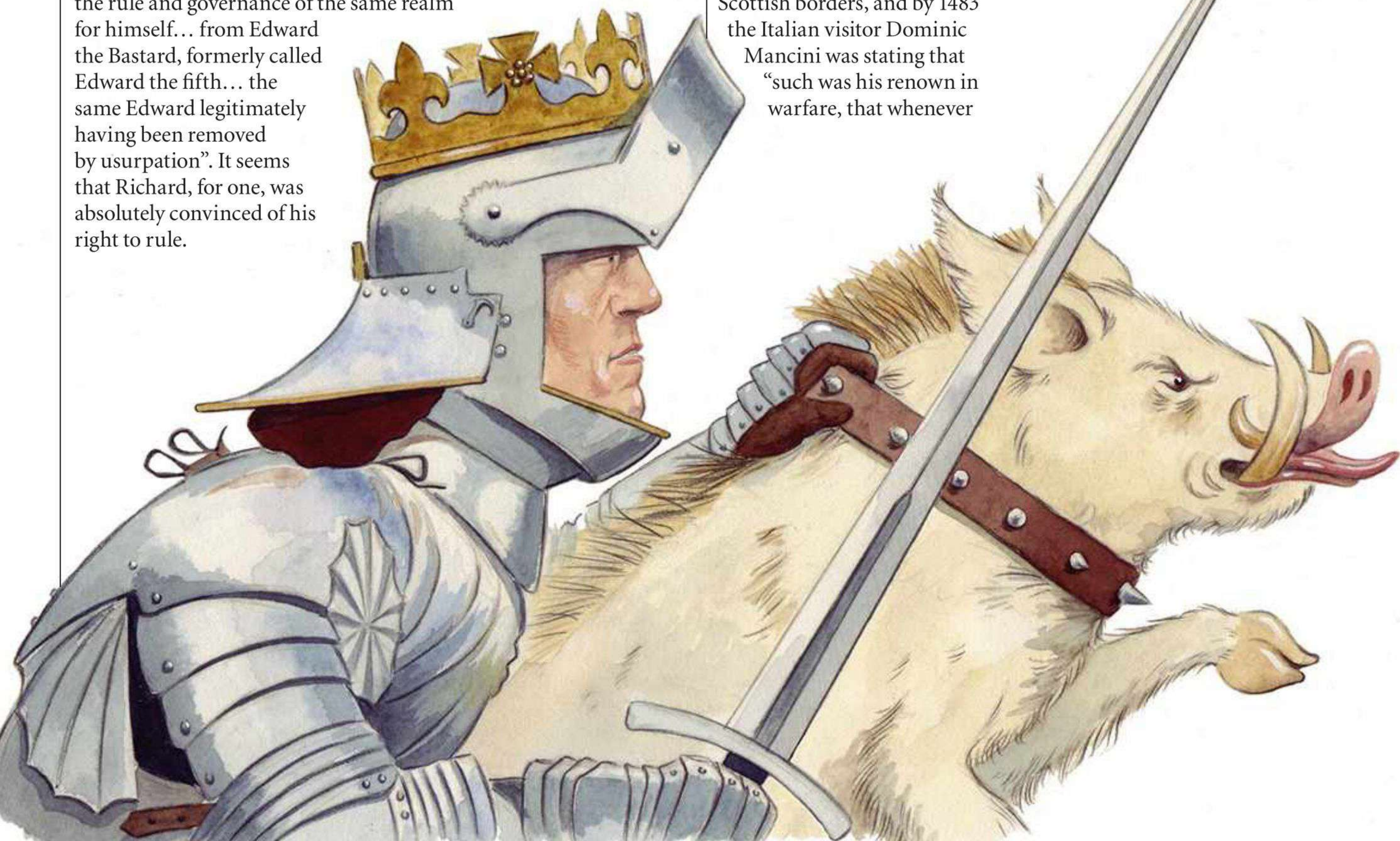
Richard first saw military action in the battles of Barnet – where one source indicates he was wounded – and Tewkesbury. His fighting skills were praised by one poet, who described Richard as a young Hector. In 1480, Richard wrote to the French king Louis XI, thanking him for "the great bombard which you caused to be presented to me, for I have always taken and still take great pleasure in artillery and I assure you it will be a special treasure to me".

Richard later took a leading role in the defence of the Scottish borders, and by 1483 the Italian visitor Dominic Mancini was stating that "such was his renown in warfare, that whenever

a difficult and dangerous policy had to be undertaken, it would be entrusted to his discretion and generalship".

The records of Richard's reign are littered with payments for military weapons and equipment: for instance, he spent £560 (£280,000) on 157 complete suits of armour, and a further £64 19s 1d (£32,000) on 2,228lbs of saltpetre for making gunpowder.

In 1485 Richard ordered that Edward Benstead, a gentleman usher of the chamber, was sent to the Tower to "shoot certain our guns we have been making there for their prove and assay". Richard also ordered that a "long scaling bridge" under construction at the Tower be put through its paces.





# He threw a good party

Details of the receipts for Richard III's coronation banquet survive, and they suggest that the king's accession to the throne in the summer of 1483 was celebrated in some style. The banquet comprised 75 different dishes over three courses, to be served to 1,200 "messes" (shared tables) that would feed around 3,000 people in total.

The guests tucked into 30 bulls, 140 sheep, 100 calves, six boars, 12 fatted pigs, 200 suckling pigs, eight hart deer, 140 bucks, eight roe deer and fawns. In addition, the lower ranks at the banquet would be treated to 288 marrow bones, 72 ox feet, and 144 calves' feet.

For the fish dishes, the caterer ordered 400 lampreys, 350 pikes, four porpoises, 40 bream, 30 salmon cut into thin slices, 100 trout, 40 carp, 480 freshwater crayfish, 200 cod and salt fish, another 36 other 'sea fish', 100 tench, and 200 mullet.

The banquet also included 1,000 geese, 800 rabbits, 800 chickens, with another 400 chickens 'to stew', in addition to 300 sparrows or larks, 2,400 pigeons, 1,000 capons, 800 rails (a large, fat bird), 40 cygnets, 16 dozen heron, 48 peacocks, eight dozen of both cranes and pheasants, six dozen bitterns, 240 quails, three dozen egrets, 12 dozen curlews and 120 'piper chicks' – probably young pigeons.

To spice the dishes, 28lbs of pepper, 8lbs of saffron costing 48 shillings, 28lbs of cinnamon costing 60 shillings, 4lbs of fresh ginger and 12lbs of powdered ginger were employed, though the most popular seasoning seems to have been of the sweet variety, with 150lbs of Madeira sugar imported from Portugal, 150lbs of almonds and 200lbs of raisins making up the largest of the orders for spices in the kitchen. Dessert included 300lbs of dates, 100lbs of prunes, 1,000 oranges and 12 gallons of strawberries, decorated with 100 leaves of "pure gold".

# He was hell-bent on crushing his foes

The most detailed description of Richard III and his court comes from an eyewitness account left to us by Niclas von Popplau, a Silesian knight who visited the king while he was staying at Middleham Castle in North Yorkshire in May 1484. Popplau's text, still only available in its original German, deserves a full English translation, as it gives us our best understanding of Richard by someone who met him face to face. Popplau suggested that Richard was "three fingers taller than I, but a bit slimmer and not as thickset as I am, and much more lightly built. He has quite slender arms and thighs, and also a great heart".

Popplau was entertained by the king in his royal tent, where he witnessed Richard's bed, "decorated from top to bottom with red Samite [luxurious silk fabric] and a gold piece" with a table "covered all around with silk cloths of gold embroidered with gold. The king set himself at the table and he wore a collar of an order set with many large pearls, almost like strawberries, and diamonds. The collar was quite as wide as a man's hand," Popplau noted.

Richard requested that his German visitor sit next to him at dinner, where the king was so

engrossed in conversation that "he hardly touched his food, but talked with me all the time. He asked me about his imperial majesty [Maxmillian I], all kings and princes of the empire whom I knew well, about their habits, fortune, actions and virtues. To which I answered everything that could add to their honour and high standing. Then the king was silent for a while, and then he began again to ask me questions, about many matters and deeds."

When Popplau began to discuss a recent defeat of the Ottoman Turks in Hungary, Richard suddenly became "very pleased" and answered: "I would like my kingdom and land to lie where the land and kingdom of the king of Hungary lies, on the Turkish frontier itself. Then I would certainly, with my own people alone, without the help of other kings, princes or lords, properly drive away not only the Turks, but all my enemies and opponents." For Richard, it was a dream that proved impossible to fulfil. **H**



At the banquet Richard was so **engrossed in conversation** that 'he hardly touched his food, but **talked with me all the time**'

Chris Skidmore MP is an author and historian who also serves as Conservative MP for Kingswood. His forthcoming book *Richard III: Brother, Protector, King* will be published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson in 2016

## DISCOVER MORE

### BOOK

► **Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors** by Chris Skidmore (Orion, 2014)



# THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER

WHY WAS THEIR FATE NEVER EXPLAINED?

A deafening silence surrounded the disappearance of Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York. But why? As **Leanda de Lisle** writes, both Richard III and Henry Tudor had good reasons not to talk publicly about the princes







“There was a **high risk the dead princes would attract a cult**, for in them the religious qualities attached to royalty were combined with the purity of childhood”

Paul Delaroche's 19th-century painting shows King Edward V and the Duke of York in the Tower of London. What happened to them next has puzzled historians for centuries



**L**ocked in the Tower in June 1483 with his younger brother, the 12-year-old Edward V was certain “that death was facing him”. Two overthrown kings had died in suspicious circumstances already that century. Yet it was still possible their uncle, Richard III, would spare them. The princes were so very young, and if it were accepted that they were bastards, as their uncle claimed, they would pose little threat.

The innocent Richard, Duke of York, only nine years old, remained “joyous” and full of “frolics”, even as the last of their servants were dismissed. But the boys were spotted behind the Tower windows less and less often, and by the summer’s end they had vanished.

It is the fact of their disappearance that lies at the heart of the many conspiracy theories over what happened to the princes. Murder was suspected, but without bodies no one could be certain even that they were dead. Many different scenarios have been put forward in the years since. In the nearest surviving contemporary accounts, Richard is accused of ordering their deaths, the boys having been either suffocated with their bedding, drowned, or killed by having their arteries cut. Other theories suggested that one or both of the princes escaped.

In more modern times, some have come to believe that Richard III was innocent of ordering the children’s deaths, and instead spirited his nephews abroad or to a safe place nearer home, only for them to be killed later by Henry VII who feared the boys’ rival claims to the throne. None

of these theories, however, has provided a satisfactory answer to the conundrum at the heart of this mystery: the fact that the boys simply vanished.

If the princes were alive, why did Richard not say so in October 1483, when the rumours he had ordered them killed were fuelling a rebellion? If they were dead, why had he not followed earlier examples of royal killings? The bodies of deposed kings were displayed and claims made that they had died of natural causes, so that loyalties could be transferred to the new king.

That the answer to these questions lies in the 15th century seems obvious, but it can be hard to stop thinking like 21st-century detectives and start thinking like contemporaries. To the modern mind, if Richard III was a religious man and a good king, as many believe he was, then he could not have ordered the deaths of two children.





The monument to Henry VII and Elizabeth of York at Westminster Abbey. The princes' bones may lie close to those of the king who sought to hide their memory

But even good people do bad things if they're given the right motivation.

In the 15th century it was a primary duty of good kingship to ensure peace and national harmony. After his coronation, Richard III continued to employ many of his brother Edward IV's former servants, but by the end of July 1483 it was already clear that some did not accept that Edward IV's sons were illegitimate, and judged Richard to be a usurper. The fact that the princes remained a focus of opposition gave Richard a strong motive for having them killed – just as his brother had killed the king he deposed.

The childlike, helpless Lancastrian Henry VI was found dead in the Tower in 1471, after more than a decade of conflict between the rival royal houses of Lancaster and York. It was said he was killed by grief and rage over the death in battle of his son, but few can have doubted that Edward IV ordered Henry's murder. Henry VI's death extirpated the House of Lancaster. Only Henry VI's half nephew, Henry Tudor – a descendent of John of Gaunt, founder of the Lancastrian House, through his mother's illegitimate Beaufort line – was left to represent their cause.

Trapped in European exile, Henry Tudor posed a negligible threat to Edward IV. However, Richard was acutely aware of an

“For Richard III, the vanishing of the princes was a case of **least said, soonest mended**. Without a grave, there could be no focus for a cult”

unexpected sequel to Henry VI's death. The murdered king was acclaimed as a saint, with rich and poor alike venerating him as an innocent whose troubled life gave him some insight into their own difficulties. Miracles were reported at the site of his modest grave in Chertsey Abbey, Surrey. One man claimed that the dead king had even deigned to help him when he had a bean trapped in his ear: said bean purportedly popped out after the afflicted man prayed to the deposed king.

Edward IV failed to put a halt to the popular cult, and Richard III shared his late brother's anxieties about its ever-growing power. It had a strong following in his home

city of York, where a statue of ‘Henry the saint’ was built on the choir screen at York Minster. In 1484 Richard attempted to take control of the cult with an act of reconciliation, moving Henry VI's body to St George's Chapel, Windsor. In the meantime, there was a high risk the dead princes too would attract a cult, for in them the religious qualities attached to royalty were combined with the purity of childhood.

### An insecure king

In England we have no equivalent today to the shrine at Lourdes in France, visited by thousands of pilgrims every year looking for healing or spiritual renewal. But we can recall the vast crowds outside Buckingham Palace after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Imagine that feeling and enthusiasm in pilgrims visiting the tombs of two young princes and greatly magnified by the closeness people then felt with the dead. It would have been highly dangerous to the king who had taken their throne. For Richard, the vanishing of the princes was a case of least said, soonest mended, for without a grave for them, there could be no focus for a cult. Without a body or items belonging to the dead placed on display, there would be no relics, either.

Nevertheless, Richard needed the princes' mother, Elizabeth Woodville, and



# The players in the princes' downfall

## Henry VI (1421–71)

### Lost his life in the Tower

Succeeding his father, Henry V, who died when he was just a few months old, Henry VI's reign was challenged by political and economic crises. It was interrupted by his mental and physical breakdown in 1453, at which time Richard, 3rd Duke of York, was appointed protector of the realm. Both men were direct descendants of Edward III. In 1455, Richard's own claim to the throne resulted in the first clashes of the Wars of the Roses, fought between supporters of the dynastic houses of Lancaster and York over the succession.

Richard died at the battle of Wakefield in 1460, but his family claim to the throne survived him, and the following year his eldest son became King Edward IV. Richard's younger son would also be king, as Richard III. Henry VI was briefly restored to the throne in 1470 but the Lancastrians were finally defeated at Tewkesbury in 1471, and Henry was probably put to death in the Tower of London a few days later.

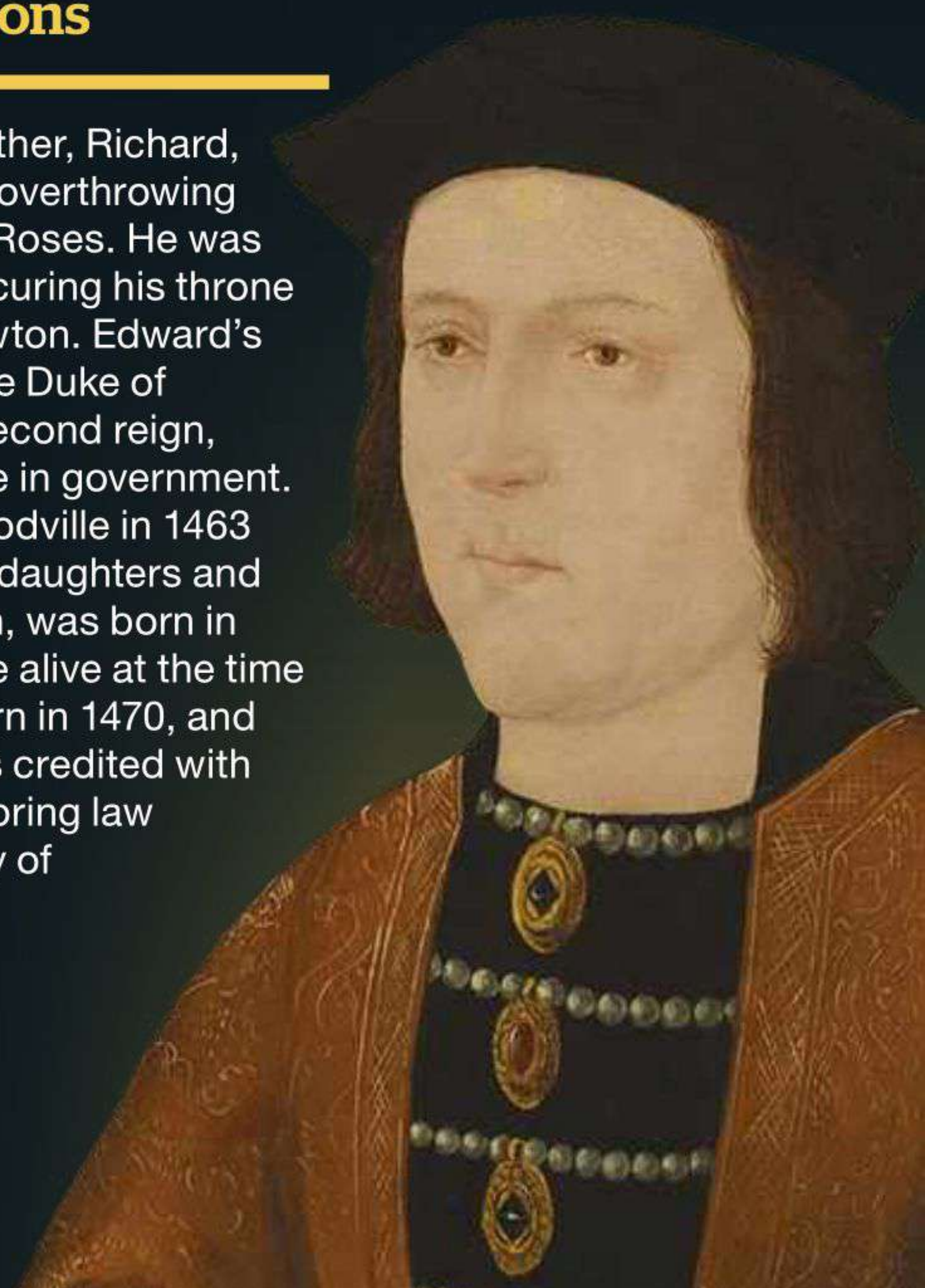


## Edward IV (1442–83)

### Died before his young sons

Edward succeeded where his father, Richard, the third Duke of York failed – in overthrowing Henry VI during the Wars of the Roses. He was declared king in March 1461, securing his throne with a victory at the battle of Towton. Edward's younger brother Richard became Duke of Gloucester. Later, in Edward's second reign, Richard played an important role in government.

Edward married Elizabeth Woodville in 1463 and they had 10 children: seven daughters and three sons. The eldest, Elizabeth, was born in 1466. Two of the three sons were alive at the time of Edward's death – Edward, born in 1470, and Richard, born 1473. Edward IV is credited with being financially astute and restoring law and order. He died unexpectedly of natural causes on 9 April 1483.



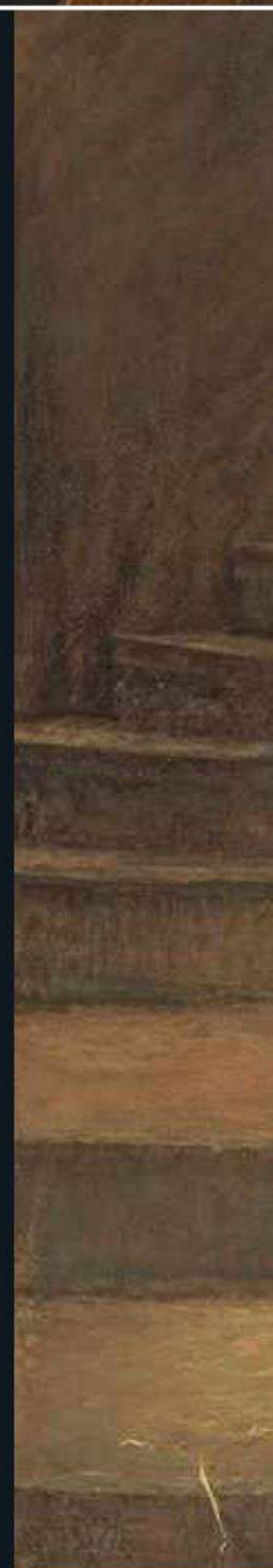
## Edward V (1470–83)

### Richard, Duke of York (1473–83)

### Deposed and disappeared

Edward IV's heir was his eldest son, also named Edward. When the king died unexpectedly, his will, which has not survived, reportedly named his previously loyal brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as lord protector. On hearing of his father's death, the young Edward and his entourage began a journey from Ludlow to the capital. Gloucester intercepted the party in Buckinghamshire. Claiming that the Woodvilles were planning to take power by force, Gloucester seized the prince.

On 4 May 1483, Edward entered London in the charge of Gloucester. Edward's coronation was scheduled for 22 June. On 16 June, Elizabeth was persuaded to surrender Edward's younger brother, Richard, apparently to attend the ceremony. With both princes in his hands, Gloucester publicised his claim to the throne. He was crowned as Richard III on 6 July and a conspiracy to rescue the princes failed that month. By September, rebels were seeing Henry Tudor as a candidate for the throne, suggesting the princes were already believed to be dead.



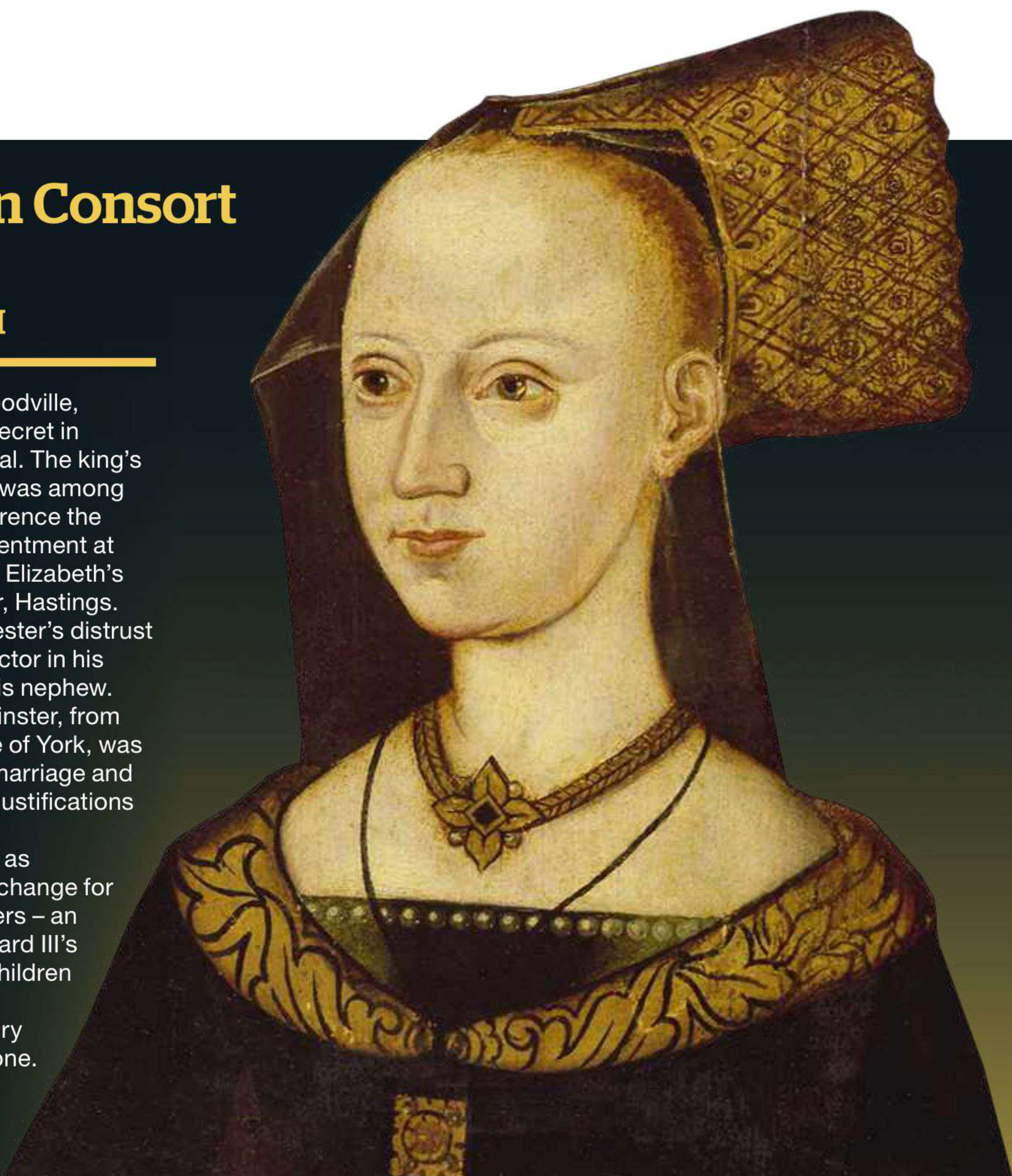


## Elizabeth, Queen Consort (c1437-92)

### Had to submit to Richard III

Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, a widow with children, took place in secret in 1464 and met with political disapproval. The king's brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was among those allegedly hostile to it. The preference the Woodville family received caused resentment at court, and there was friction between Elizabeth's family and the king's powerful advisor, Hastings. On Edward IV's death in 1483, Gloucester's distrust of the Woodvilles was apparently a factor in his decision to seize control of the heir, his nephew. Elizabeth sought sanctuary in Westminster, from where her younger son Richard, Duke of York, was later removed. The legitimacy of her marriage and her children was one of Gloucester's justifications for usurping the throne on 26 June.

Once parliament confirmed his title as Richard III, Elizabeth submitted, in exchange for protection for herself and her daughters – an arrangement he honoured. After Richard III's death at the battle of Bosworth, her children were declared legitimate. Her eldest, Elizabeth of York, was married to Henry VII, strengthening his claim to the throne.

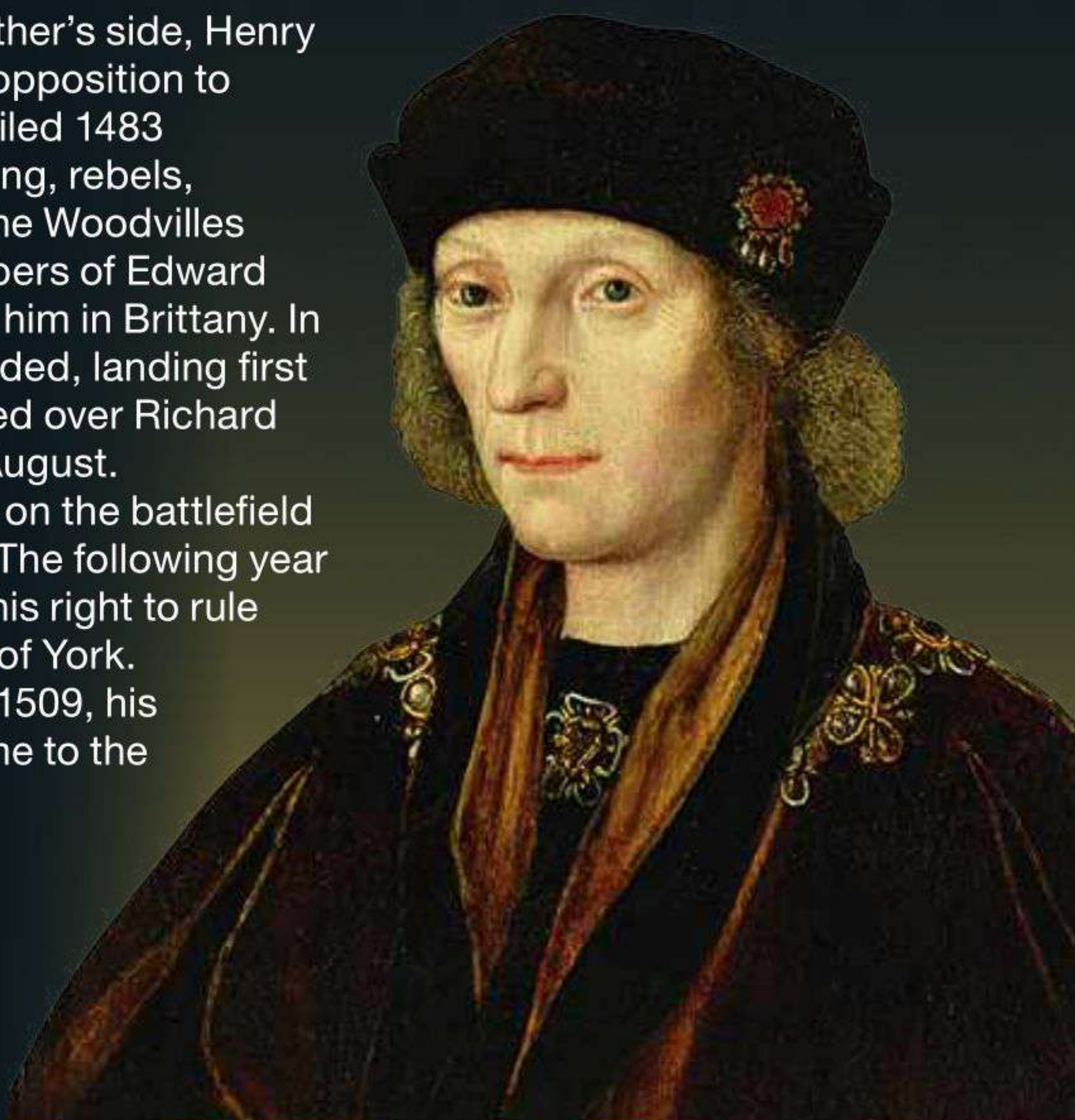


## Henry VII (1457-1509)

### Battled his way to the throne

Henry Tudor was the son of Margaret Beaufort (great-great-granddaughter of Edward III) and Edmund Tudor, half-brother of Henry VI. In 1471, after Edward IV regained the throne, Henry fled to Brittany, where he avoided the king's attempts to have him returned. As a potential candidate for the throne through his mother's side, Henry became the focus for opposition to Richard III. After the failed 1483 rebellion against the king, rebels, including relatives of the Woodvilles and loyal former members of Edward IV's household, joined him in Brittany. In 1485 Henry Tudor invaded, landing first in Wales, and triumphed over Richard III at Bosworth on 22 August.

Henry was crowned on the battlefield with Richard's crown. The following year he further legitimised his right to rule by marrying Elizabeth of York. When the king died in 1509, his son with Elizabeth came to the throne as Henry VIII.





others who might follow Edward V, to know that the boys were dead, in order to forestall plots raised in their name. According to the Tudor historian Polydore Vergil, Elizabeth Woodville fainted when she was told her sons had been killed. As she came round, “She wept, she cried out loud, and with lamentable shrieks made all the house ring, she struck her breast, tore and cut her hair.” She also called for vengeance.

Elizabeth Woodville made an agreement with Henry Tudor’s mother, Margaret Beaufort, that Henry should marry her daughter, Elizabeth of York, and called on Edwardian loyalists to back their cause. The rebellion that followed in October 1483 proved Richard had failed to restore peace. While he defeated these risings, less than two years later – at the battle of Bosworth in August 1485 – he was betrayed by part of his own army and killed, sword in hand.

The princes were revenged, but it soon became evident that Henry VII was in no hurry to investigate their fate. It is possible that the new monarch feared such an investigation would draw attention to a role in their fate played by someone close to his cause – most likely Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham. The duke, who came from a Lancastrian family, was a close ally of Richard in the overthrow of Edward V, but later turned against the king. Known as a “sore and hard dealing man”, it is possible he encouraged Richard to have the princes murdered, planning then to see Richard killed and the House of York overthrown. In November 1483 Richard executed Buckingham for treason, but Buckingham’s name remained associated at home and abroad with the princes’ disappearance.

## Rival saints

What is certain is that Henry, like Richard, had good reasons for wishing to forestall a cult of the princes. Henry’s blood claim to the throne was extremely weak, and he was fearful of being seen as a mere king consort to Elizabeth of York. To counter this, Henry claimed the throne in his own right, citing divine providence – God’s intervention on earth – as evidence that he was a true king (only God made kings). A key piece of evidence used in support of this idea was a story that, a few months before his murder, ‘the saint’ Henry VI had prophesied Henry Tudor’s reign.

It would not have been wise to allow Yorkist royal saints to compete with the memory of Henry VI, whose cult Henry VII now wished to encourage. In 1485, therefore, nothing was said of the princes’ disappearance, beyond a vague accusation



The pretender Perkin Warbeck (1474–99) claimed to be Richard, Duke of York

“There appeared, as if **raised from the dead** one of the sons of King Edward... a youth by the name of Richard’. He was said to be a Dutchman – but who could be sure?”

in parliament during the autumn that Richard III was guilty of “treasons, homicides and murders in shedding of infants’ blood”. No search was made for the boys’ bodies, and they were given no rite of burial. Indeed even the fate of their souls was, seemingly, abandoned.

I have not found any evidence of endowments set up to pay for prayers for the princes that century. Henry may well have feared that the churches where these so-called ‘chantries’ might be established would become centres for the kind of cult he wanted to avoid. But their absence would have struck people as very strange. Praying for the dead was a crucial aspect of medieval religion. In December 1485, when Henry issued a special charter refounding his favourite religious order, the Observant Friars, at Greenwich, he noted that offering masses for the dead was, “the greatest work of piety and mercy, for through it souls would be purged”. It was unthinkable not to help the souls of your loved ones pass from purgatory to heaven with prayers

and masses. On the other hand, it was akin to a curse to say a requiem for a living person – you were effectively praying for their death.

The obvious question posed by the lack of public prayers for the princes was: were they still alive? And, as Vergil recalled, in 1491 there appeared in Ireland, as if “raised from the dead one of the sons of King Edward... a youth by the name of Richard”. Henry VII said the man claiming to be the younger of the princes was, in fact, a Dutchman called Perkin Warbeck – but who could be sure?

Henry was more anxious than ever that the princes be forgotten. When their mother, Elizabeth Woodville, died in June 1492, she was buried “privily... without any solemn dirge done for her obit”. It has been suggested this may have reflected her dying wishes to be buried “without pomp”. But Henry VII also asked to be buried without pomp. He still expected, and got, one of the most stately funerals of the Middle Ages. Elizabeth





The forbidding entrance to the Bloody Tower at the Tower of London, the fortress where Richard III imprisoned his brother's sons

Woodville emphatically did not receive the same treatment. Much has been made of this in conspiracy theories concerning the princes (especially on the question of whether she believed them to be alive) but Henry's motives become clear when recalled in the context of the period.

This was an era of visual symbols and display: kings projected their power and significance in palaces decorated with their badges, in rich clothes and elaborate ceremonies. Elizabeth Woodville, like her sons, was being denied the images of a great funeral with its effigies, banners and grand ceremonial. This caused negative comment at the time. But with Warbeck's appearance, Henry wanted to avoid any nostalgia for the past glories of the House of York.

It was 1497 before Perkin Warbeck was captured. Henry then kept him alive because he wanted Warbeck publicly and repeatedly to confess his modest birth. Warbeck was eventually executed in 1499. Yet even then Henry continued to fear the power of the vanished princes. Three years later, it was given out that condemned traitor Sir James Tyrell had, before his

execution, confessed to arranging their murder on Richard's orders. Henry VIII's chancellor, Thomas More, claimed he was told the murdered boys had been buried at the foot of some stairs in the Tower, but that Richard had asked for their bodies to be reburied with dignity and that those involved had subsequently died so the boys' final resting place was unknown – a most convenient outcome for Henry.

While the princes' graves remained unmarked, the tomb of Henry VI came to rival the internationally famous tomb of Thomas Becket at Canterbury as a site of mass pilgrimage. Henry ran a campaign to have his half-uncle beatified by the pope, which continued even after Henry's death, ending only with Henry VIII's break with Rome. The Reformation then brought to a close the cult of saints in England. Our cultural memories of their power faded away, which explains why we overlook the significance of the cult of Henry VI in the fate of the princes.

In 1674, long after the passing of the Tudors, two skeletons were recovered in the Tower, in a place that resembled More's

description of the princes' first burial place. They were interred at Westminster Abbey, not far from where Henry VII lies. In 1933, they were removed and examined by two doctors. Broken and incomplete, the skeletons were judged to be two children, one aged between seven and 11 and the other between 11 and 13. The little bones were returned to the abbey, and whoever they were, remain a testament to the failure of Richard and Henry to bury the princes in eternal obscurity. **H**

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**Leanda de Lisle** is a historian and writer. Her book *Tudor: The Family Story (1437–1603)* was published by Chatto and Windus in 2013

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOKS

- **Blood and Roses** by Helen Castor (Faber & Faber, 2005)
- **The Last Days of Richard III and the Fate of his DNA** by John Ashdown Hill (History Press, 2013)
- **Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors** by Chris Skidmore (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013)




**VILLAIN OF THE PIECE**

Laurence Olivier plays Richard III in the 1955 film adaptation of Shakespeare's play. In it, the controversial monarch is damned as everything from a "bottled spider" and "lump of foul deformity" to a "poisonous bunch-backed toad"



**“Subtle,  
false and  
treacherous”**





# Why did Shakespeare revile Richard III?

**Paulina Kewes** considers the sources used by William Shakespeare in his construction of the character of King Richard III as an arch-villain

**P**hysically deformed and, by his own word, “subtle, false and treacherous”, Richard III is one of Shakespeare’s greatest villains. In the course of the play that bears his name, Richard plots and murders his way to the throne, only to lose it to Richmond – the future King Henry VII.

But, unlike some of Shakespeare’s other dark characters (Iago, for instance, whose motives we never fully fathom, or Macbeth, whose tortured descent into evil lends affective force to his tragedy), Richard gleefully exults in his capacity for dissimulation. He shares his wicked machinations with the audience in a series of spirited monologues and asides: “And thus I clothe my naked villainy / With odd old ends, stol’n forth of Holy Writ / And seem a saint when most I play the devil.” The upshot is that we cannot help but applaud his verbal dexterity, thespian flair and boundless energy, and become effectively complicit in his success.

Meanwhile, Richard’s ever more vicious actions prompt his victims and their kin to unleash a barrage of invective, curses and prophecies of divine vengeance. They denounce him as a “fiend”, “devil”, “homicide”, “dissembler”, “hell-hound”, and, rather more creatively, as “bottled spider”, “lump of foul deformity”, “defused infection of a man”, “elvish marked abortive rooting hog” and “poisonous bunch-backed toad”.

Ostensibly impervious to abuse no less than to pricks of conscience, Richard begins to crumble the moment he gains the crown.

Instead of the consummate Machiavellian, we see a fearful and increasingly desperate tyrant who will stop at nothing to maintain his grip on power, be it murdering his nephews or poisoning his wife. The ghostly visitation of those he has wronged graphically confirms Richard’s ignominious defeat at Bosworth as the work of providence.

On the eve of battle, the ghosts appear to both Richard and Richmond, heaping opprobrium on the tyrant even as they predict the triumph of his “virtuous and holy” opponent. The play concludes with a rousing vision of peace and plenty under the descendants of the Lancastrian Richmond and Elizabeth of York, whom the final lines hail as “the true succeeders of each royal house”.

Shakespeare’s *Richard III* was first performed around 1592/3, amid mounting religious tensions and widespread fears of civil war and foreign invasion fuelled by the unresolved succession to Queen Elizabeth I, then almost 60 years old, single, and childless. King James VI of Scotland followed her on the throne after her death in 1603.

The story of a tyrannical usurper whose apparently providential fall puts paid to long and bloody civil wars would have held a complex resonance for the original audience. Just what the Elizabethans might have made of the play’s portrayal of Richard – and Richmond – will become clearer as we review competing versions and consider Shakespeare’s intriguing departures from his sources.

Modern scholars such as Rosemary Horrox have challenged the unremittingly





Queen Margaret (right), wife of King Henry VI. She plays a prominent – and unhistorical – role in Shakespeare's *Richard III*

negative view of Richard III that was largely the product of early Tudor propaganda. Though hardly a paragon, the historical Richard was probably not as premeditated in his bid for the throne – nor, perhaps, quite as physically misshapen – as he was later made out to be. Had he won at Bosworth, the tenor of the ensuing reports would, of course, have been very different.

Still, Shakespeare's anatomy of Richard's tyranny was not his own invention. He drew extensively on the second edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587), a monumental undertaking that was the first to provide a comprehensive coverage of the history and topography of the British Isles (see boxes on pages 47, 49 and 50).

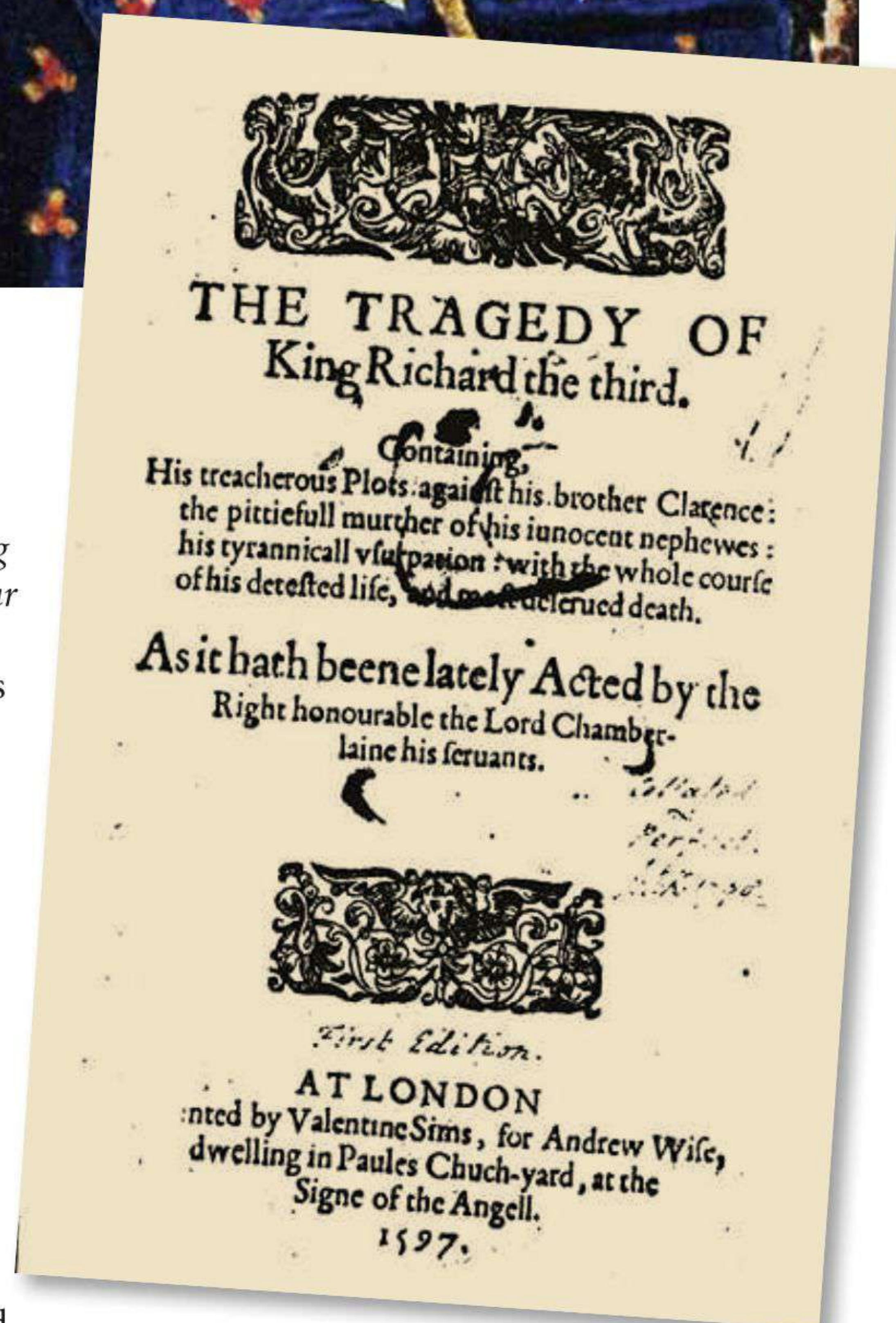
Holinshed's book gave rise to more plays than any other work, old or new, in the

early modern period. Among them were not only numerous histories such as *Henry V*, *Richard II* and *King John*, and tragedies such as *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, but also romantic tragicomedies such as *Cymbeline*, as well as domestic tragedies. Most of these mingled chronicle lore with material from ballads, narrative poems or romances. There were also adaptations of prior plays based on the *Chronicles* that imported extra details from this and other sources. Shakespeare's *Richard III* is one of them.

The *Chronicles* collected and reproduced, virtually word for word, the accounts of Richard III by earlier writers, among them Sir Thomas More, Edward Hall and Richard Grafton, powerfully reinforcing their hostile tone by means of judgmental commentaries and marginal notes (see box on page 49).

But Shakespeare's selection of material and his imaginative transformation of it made his portrait of the king even blacker than that found in prose historiography. For instance, unlike the chroniclers, who registered residual doubt about Richard's guilt, Shakespeare shows him directly responsible for the killing of the princes in the Tower. And he emphasises the growing public discontent with Richard's

*“Richard III was first performed amid mounting religious tensions and widespread fears of civil war”*



Title page of the first printed edition of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. The play was first performed against a backdrop of growing uncertainty over the future of the English crown

usurpation of the boy king in a few exchanges involving commoners.

Aside from Holinshed, Shakespeare also drew on two earlier plays about Richard III. One was a three-part Latin academic drama, *Richardus Tertius*, performed in Cambridge in 1579 and thereafter circulated widely in manuscript copies; the



# Shakespeare's source: Holinshed's *Chronicles*



Macbeth and Banquo meet the three witches in this c16th-century woodcut

*The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577, 1587), published under the name of Raphael Holinshed, were the crowning achievement of Tudor historical writing. But these monumental tomes – the second edition numbered no fewer than 3.5m words – were a fraction of what they should have been. And Holinshed was not their sole begetter. The original plan conceived in the late 1540s by Reginald Wolfe, a London-based bookseller of Dutch extraction, had been to provide a universal chronicle comprising descriptions and histories of every known nation.

Wolfe employed the then 20-something Holinshed to carry out this breathtakingly ambitious enterprise but, following Wolfe's death, the consortium of publishers who took over the project scaled it back to minimise costs. This is why the book printed in 1577 focused exclusively on the British Isles.

In preparing it, Holinshed, who compiled the histories of England, Scotland and in part Ireland, had two principal collaborators: William Harrison, a radical Protestant clergyman, who wrote a description of Britain; and Richard Stanishurst, a Dubliner and later convert to Catholicism who supplied a description of Ireland and reworked a section of Irish history by his friend, the future Jesuit martyr Edmund Campion.

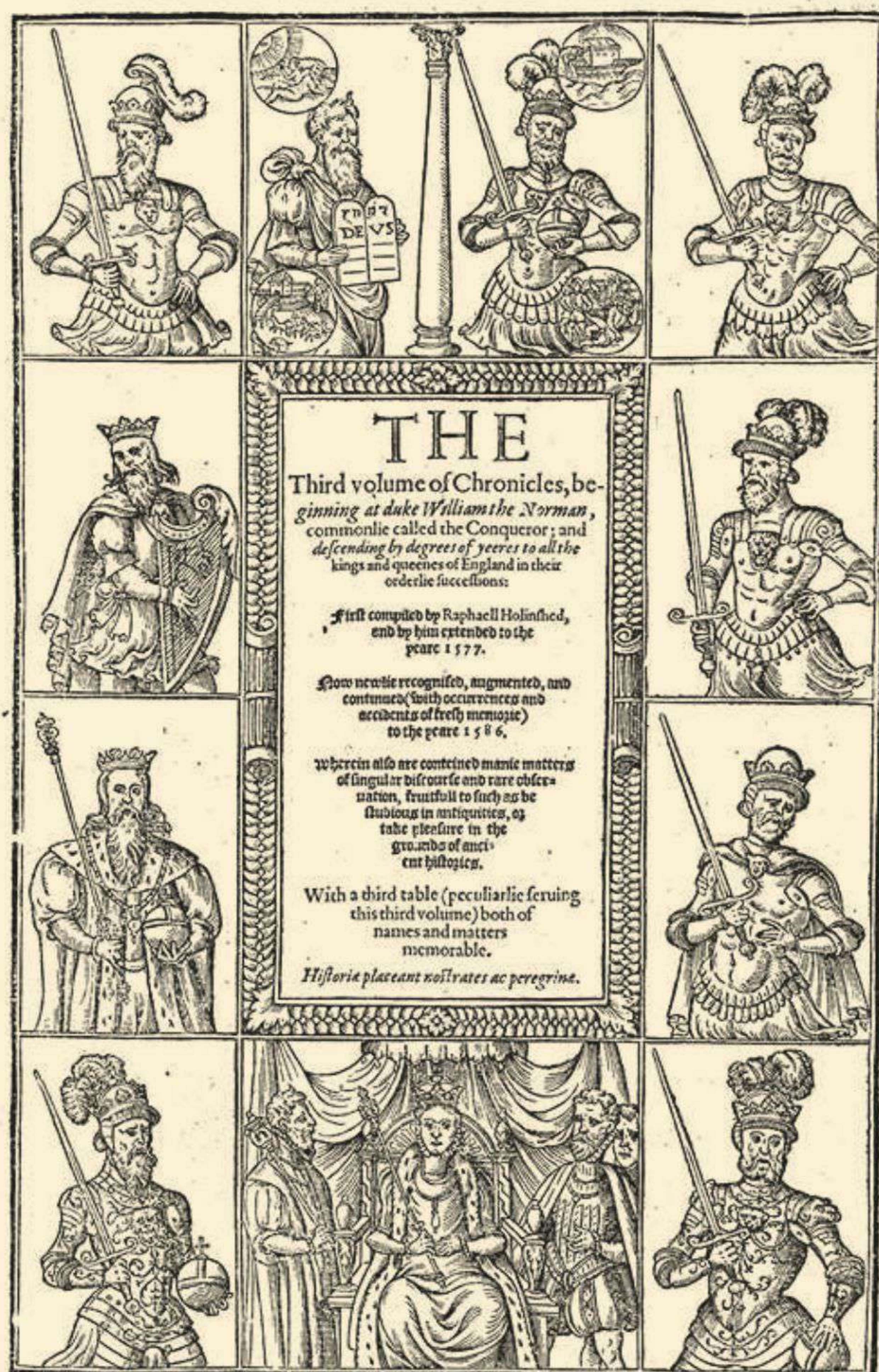
These men relied extensively on the work of earlier chroniclers and antiquarians, from Geoffrey of Monmouth,

Gerard of Wales and Hector Boece to Edward Hall and John Leland. At a time when there was no copyright as we know it, and when ideas of plagiarism were only just emerging, wholesale appropriation of earlier materials was common practice. But the contributors were learned men, and typically acknowledged their sources.

The 1577 edition had numerous woodcut illustrations – one depicted Macbeth and Banquo's encounter with the weird sisters. It must have been a commercial success, because within seven years the publishers commissioned a revised and expanded version. By then Holinshed was dead, and the task of co-ordinating the venture fell to Abraham Fleming, a Cambridge-educated Protestant. Fleming produced a continuation of the English chronicle, and supplied chapter headings and marginal notes to make the contents easier to cross-reference.

With the exception of Harrison, who revised and expanded his description of Britain, other contributors were newcomers to the project. John Hooker – like Fleming, a godly Protestant – reworked and continued the Irish chronicle, giving it a strongly anti-Catholic flavour. John Stow, London historian and collector of manuscripts, contributed to the chronicle of England. Finally, Francis

**The bookseller Reginald Wolfe, who set out to produce a history of every known nation**



"A monumental tome": the frontispiece to the third volume of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*

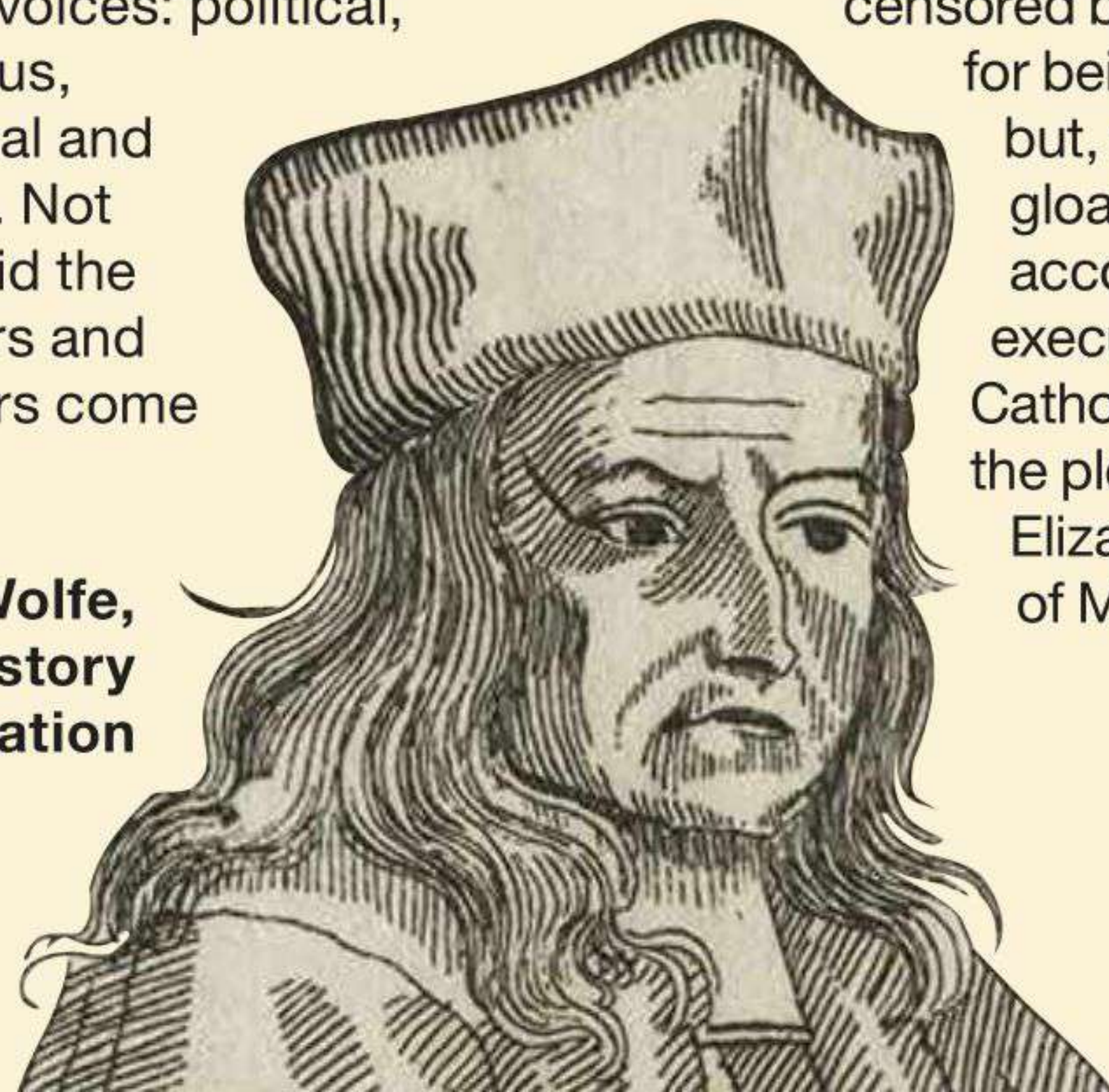
**"Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* was the crowning achievement of Tudor historical writing"**

Thynne expanded and updated that of Scotland. Published early in 1587, the massive new edition lacked woodcut illustrations but its typeface was greatly superior.

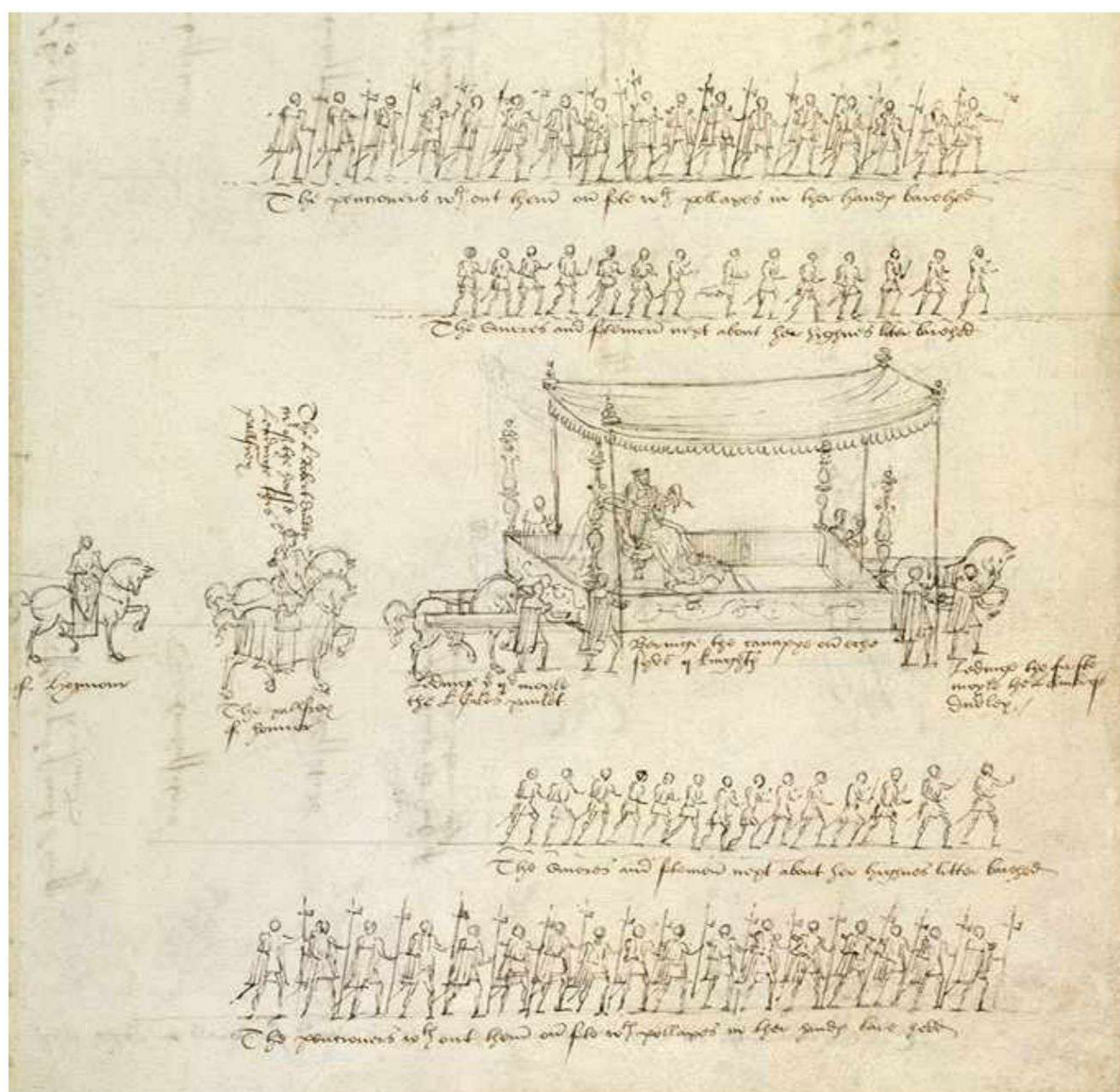
The *Chronicles* spoke with many voices: political, religious, national and social. Not only did the authors and revisers come

from diverse backgrounds, but they also used a huge variety of conflicting sources. In view of this diversity, it is surprising that the book attracted so little official disapproval. Indeed, the 1587 edition was chiefly

censored by the regime not for being oppositional but, rather, too gloating in its account of the executions of Catholics involved in the plot to topple Elizabeth in favour of Mary Stewart.







**A QUEEN IS CROWNED** A drawing of Elizabeth's coronation procession. One of the pageants mounted on the eve of the coronation was filled with references to the marriage of her grandparents, Henry VII and Elizabeth, and the resulting union of Lancaster and York



An engraved likeness of Richard III taken from *A Book, Containing the True Portraiture of the Countenances and Attires of the Kings of England*, 1597

other was an anonymous piece, *The True Tragedy of Richard III*, first staged around 1590/91 by a major professional company and printed in 1594. In neither play is Richard the towering presence he assumes in Shakespeare, though both hint at the contemporary relevance of the story in the context of the unresolved succession to Elizabeth.

Shakespeare's Richard additionally advertises his affinity with the "formal Vice, Iniquity", a character familiar from medieval morality drama and Tudor interludes. This device works to establish Richard's rapport with the audience and highlights his self-consciousness as performer.

By far the most significant fictive component of Shakespeare's play relates to the enhanced role of women, likely inspired by *The True Tragedy's* sympathetic treatment of another of Richard's targets, Jane Shore, the hapless mistress of King Edward IV and then of his chamberlain, Hastings. In *Richard III*, Queen Elizabeth (wife of Edward IV), Queen Margaret (widow of Henry VI), Lady Anne (widow of Henry's son, and now

wife of Richard III) and the Duchess of York (Richard's mother) take centre stage in several unhistorical scenes that heighten the emotional intensity of the play and furnish a unique vantage point on the tyrant-in-the-making.

Perhaps the most notorious and most memorable is Richard's wooing of Lady Anne, who was wholly Shakespeare's invention. Initially repulsed by his advances, Anne spits in disgust at the hideous killer of both her husband and father-in-law, only to succumb to his sham professions of love and agree to marry the monster, who then gloatingly communicates his contempt for her to the audience. Here, again, we perceive a striking contrast between Shakespeare's narrative and dramatic sources, none of which attributed to Richard either such depths of depravity or such virtuoso acting skills.

## Politics and power

*Richard III* is magnificent theatre. It is also a searching study of the politics of power. In choosing to dramatise two contested royal transitions – from Edward IV to Richard III, and from Richard to Henry VII – Shakespeare engaged with one of the most controversial periods in the nation's history, memories of which were still very much alive. And while few of his audience would have dreamt of standing up for Richard,

**"Anne spits in disgust at the hideous killer of both her husband and father-in-law, only to succumb to his sham professions of love"**

they would have approached the story with radically different preconceptions about religion's role, the proprieties of dynastic succession and the legitimacy of resistance.

Shakespeare was once assumed to have composed his two grand historical cycles – the first comprising 1–3 *Henry VI* and *Richard III*, and the second *Richard II*, 1–2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V* – in order to illustrate the providential unfolding of the nation's history also implicit in chronicles



such as Holinshed's. On this reading, the Wars of the Roses emerge as divine punishment for the original sin of the deposition of Richard II by Bolingbroke (the future Henry IV), and order is only restored with Richmond's defeat of Richard III at Bosworth and the arrival of the Tudors. We now know this was far from the case. Internally conflicted and multi-vocal, Holinshed's *Chronicles* and other historical writings hardly promoted so uniform an interpretation of England's past.

Moreover, in the wake of the Reformation and rapid changes of regime and religion from Henry VIII to Edward VI to Mary I to Elizabeth, the contest over the meaning and application of history became hotter than ever. Small wonder, then, that historical drama by Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights evoked a range of complex and ambivalent perspectives on kingship and power. The treatment of Richard III's downfall and the subsequent union of Lancaster and York is a case in point.

At the accession of Elizabeth I, the union, which took place once Henry VII had seized the crown from Richard III, furnished an auspicious precedent. The first pageant of her coronation progress through the City of London in January 1559



depicted the new queen in the company of two royal couples – her grandparents, Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, and her parents, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn – and surrounded by a mass of white and red roses. This display, and the verses which went with it, served to confirm Elizabeth's right to the throne, reminded her of the responsibilities of kingship, and urged her to perpetuate the royal line.

“It is clear that at least some people took exception to the **relentlessly negative view** of Richard III embedded in Shakespeare”

In the early Elizabethan parliaments, exhortations for the queen to marry and name a successor routinely admonished her to ponder the misery into which England had been plunged by the protracted dynastic wars between the Lancastrians and the Yorkists. However, as the ageing queen stayed unmarried, it became plain that the Tudor line would die with her.

This prompted fresh applications of late 15th-century history, which was now summoned to express anxiety about the uncertain future. Even as it cited “the happy uniting of both houses, of whom the Queen's majesty came, and is undoubted heir”, *Richardus Tertius* less than tactfully emphasised that the Virgin Queen on whom the security of the country rested was waxing old.

The epilogue to the anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard III* likewise alluded to England's precarious situation without a definite successor: “For if her Grace's days be brought to end, / Your hope is gone, on whom did peace depend.” And how seriously are we to take the prediction enunciated towards the end of Shakespeare's *Richard III* that Richmond will beget “a happy race of kings”? Certainly, according to contemporary Catholic polemicists, the Tudors had incurred divine punishment

**Lady Anne Neville, wife of Richard III, holds a sceptre and orb**

## Richard III at his blackest

The portrait of Richard III in the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* is blacker than in any previous account. The book brings together the notoriously negative treatments written by More, Hall, Grafton and Holinshed himself, and supplements them with the moralising comments by the new editor, Abraham Fleming.

Here is More's biting depiction of Richard's physical deformity and nasty character: he was “little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed... malicious, wrathful, envious”.

After the murder of the princes, the tyrant's troubled conscience makes him anxious and fearful: “His eyes whirled about... his hand ever upon his dagger, his countenance and manner like one always ready to strike again... so was his restless heart continually tossed and tumbled with the tedious impression and stormy remembrance of his abominable deed.”



**Richard III's badge invited unflattering references to snouts and horned beasts**

Fleming hailed as providential Richard's defeat at Bosworth, and, referring to his badge of the white boar, contemptuously compared the fallen tyrant to a horned beast: “As for king Richard, better had it been for him to have contented his heart with the protectorship, than to have cast up his snout, or lifted up his horns of ambition so high... as to hack and hew down by violent blows all likely impediments.”

It would be difficult to imagine a more damning verdict on Richard III's reign than Fleming's: “Thus far Richard the usurper.”



# National identities

## The big debate in Shakespeare's England

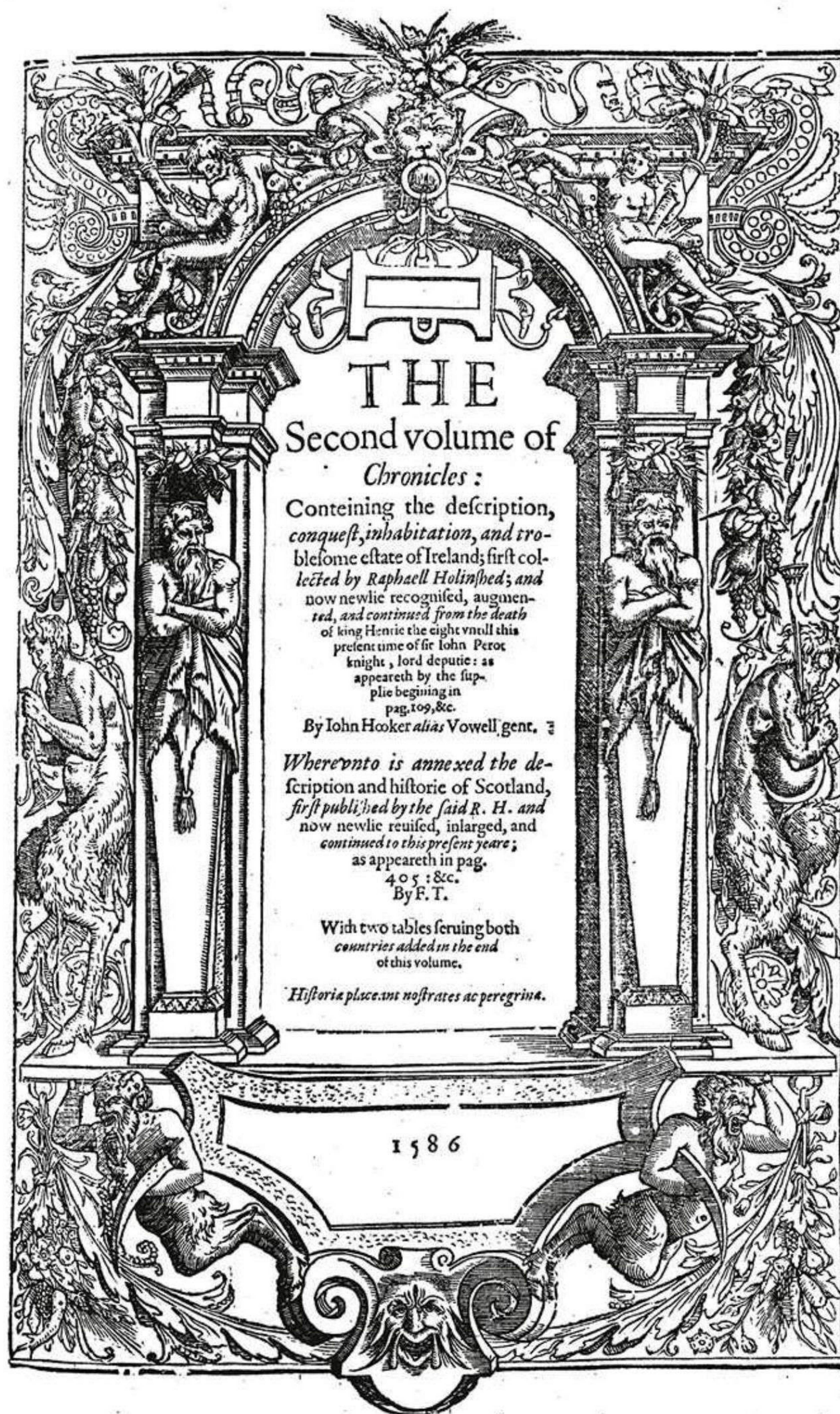
Medieval and earlier Tudor chronicles varied in scope and coverage. While some dealt exclusively with the story of England, others were more expansive and included the stories of other kingdoms and nations, notably Scotland and France.

There were also the so-called 'universal chronicles', which told the history of the world from the creation to the present day. Yet none of Raphael Holinshed's predecessors had given the complete history and topography of England, Scotland and Ireland. In placing emphasis squarely on the British Isles, Holinshed's *Chronicles* did something entirely unprecedented.

The original title page touted the book as offering descriptions and chronicles in turn of England, Scotland and Ireland. Thus, in addition to telling the story of each country from its mythic origins roughly to the present, Holinshed provided detailed accounts of the topography, natural resources, government, religion, language, laws, coinage and even fauna across the three kingdoms as well as the national traits and customs of the various peoples inhabiting the Atlantic archipelago.

Just like the national histories they accompanied, however, these descriptions embodied fundamental tensions and contradictions that existed in Shakespeare's time. On the one hand, they gave the impression that the English, Scots, Irish (and Welsh) shared a common British identity that set them apart from other nations. On the other, they drew a stark contrast between 'us' (the English) and 'them' (the treacherous Scots, the wild Irish) that was vividly underlined by the division of the book into three separate storylines.

Whichever perspective one adopted, England's supremacy was a matter of course. Given the chroniclers' repeated insistence on English superiority, it is no small irony that the union of crowns and creation of Great Britain would be realised in 1603 by the accession to the English throne of James VI of Scotland.



The frontispiece to the second volume of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, "containing the description, conquest, inhabitation, and troblesome estate of Ireland"

– which was why the offspring of the chief culprit, Henry VIII, were dying childless one after another.

And what are we to make of Richmond's self-fashioning as the minister and scourge of God? Granted that Shakespeare's blackening of Richard's character lends credibility to those who rise against him, anyone familiar with Holinshed would have known that arguments in favour of

resistance as divinely justified were often specious, self-serving and made well after the fact.

Then again, the presentation of Richmond as the agent of providence would have appealed to those hopeful of the accession of James VI of Scotland, his great-great-grandson. Already in the 1590s – while Elizabeth still reigned – we encounter burgeoning re-readings of the





This 1745 portrait of David Garrick by William Hogarth depicts the actor as Richard III, the role that propelled him to stardom

union of Lancaster and York as a foreshadowing of the union of crowns in the person of James Stewart, a latter-day Henry VII.

We shall never know for sure what its original audiences thought of Shakespeare's play, other than that they enjoyed it, and that it was widely quoted and parodied. In the 1590s there were no newspapers or periodicals to carry reviews, and no one wrote down their impressions in a diary or a letter.

But it is clear that at least some people took exception to the relentlessly negative view of Richard embedded in Holinshed and Shakespeare. For instance, John Stow, one of the contributors to the second edition of the *Chronicles*, reportedly heard from "old and grave men who had often seen King Richard... that he was not deformed, but of person and bodily shape comely enough", though Stow omitted to mention this titbit in his own historical writings.

By the second decade of the 17th century, Sir George Buck, a descendant of one of Richard's allies executed on Henry VII's orders after Bosworth, produced a lengthy and detailed defence of Richard. Published in a mangled form in the mid-17th century, Buck's revisionist tract did little to counter the prevailing chorus of disapproval.

Modern productions of *Richard III* routinely court topicality, using costume, set, and special effects to underscore parallels with latter-day despots – Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin or various Middle Eastern dictators. What makes the play especially congenial to such adaptations is Shakespeare's acute preoccupation, which he shares with his chronicle sources, about strategies of manipulating and winning public opinion. With spin and propaganda at the very centre of political life, Richard's campaign of misinformation – and, indeed, Richmond's battlefield oration staking out the legitimacy of his actions – could not be more timely or relevant. **H**

Paulina Kewes teaches English literature at Jesus College, Oxford. She is a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, published in October 2012

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOKS

- **King Richard III by William Shakespeare** James R Siemon (ed) (Arden, 2009)
- **Richard III: A Study of Service** by Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge University Press, 1989, reprinted 1999)
- **Bosworth 1485: Psychology of a Battle** by Michael K Jones (Tempus, 2002)
- **The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles (ed)** Paulina Kewes, Ian Archer and Felicity Heal (Oxford University Press, October 2012)

##### WEBSITE

- **Holinshed's Chronicles:** [www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed](http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/holinshed)



# Looking for Richard

A century of Shakespeare's villain as portrayed on stage and screen



## 1. THE GREAT DICTATOR

**Kevin Spacey** played Richard III at London's Old Vic in June 2011. As in many modern productions, Spacey's Richard was cast as a latter-day autocrat complete with metal leg-brace and walking stick

## 2. AN ACTOR'S QUEST

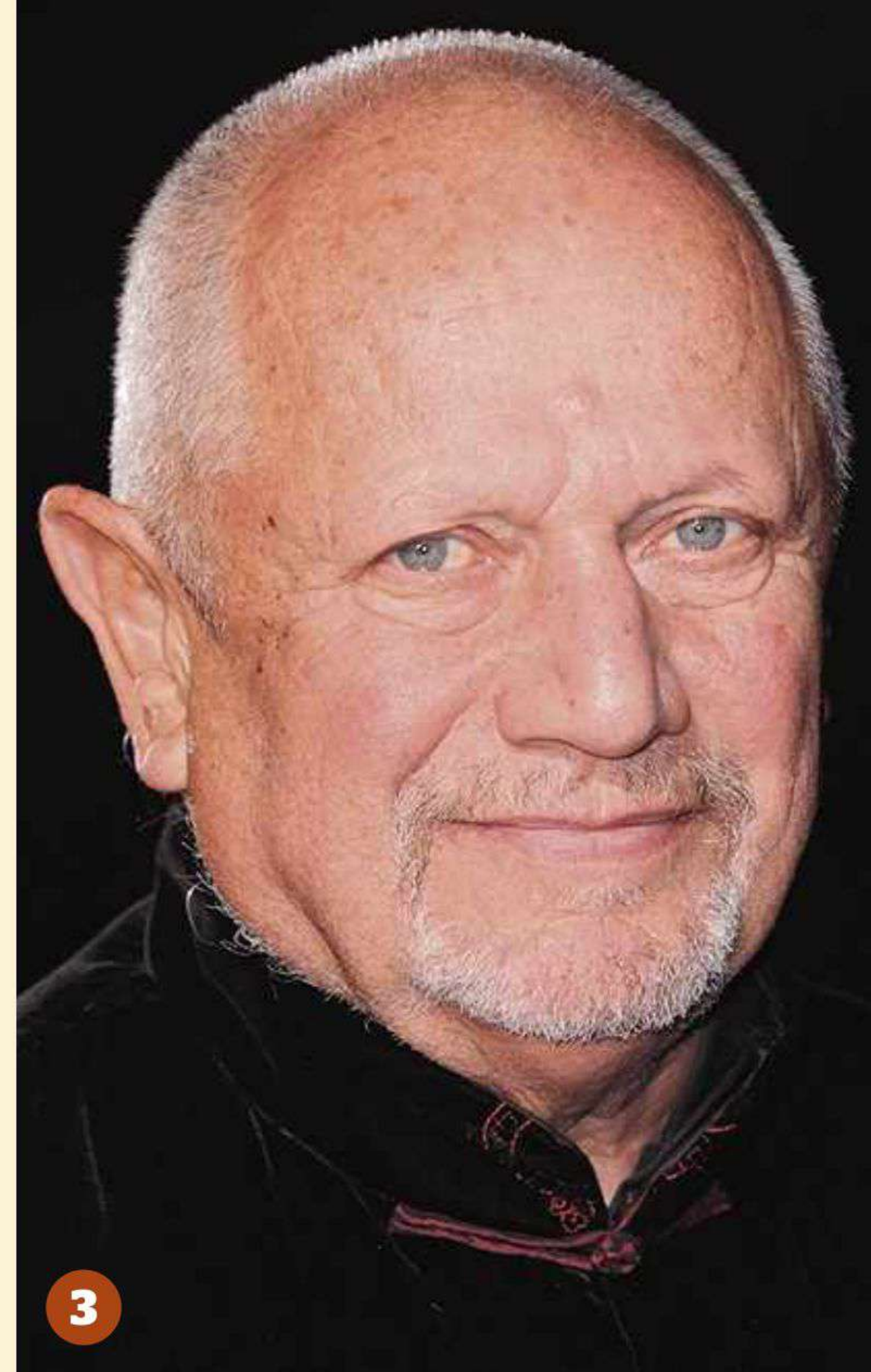
**Al Pacino** played Richard III in *Looking For Richard* (1996), a documentary weaving scenes from Shakespeare's play with insights into its historical background

## 3. NATURE OF EVIL

**Steven Berkoff** played Richard III in *Shakespeare's Villains*, a one-man play he wrote and first performed in 1998 in which he portrayed the Bard's most memorable villains, including Iago and Macbeth

## 4. LEGENDS OF THE LONDON STAGE

**Laurence Olivier** (on the right) played Richard opposite Ralph Richardson as Henry, Earl of Richmond, on stage (here at the Old Vic in 1944) and in a 1955 film



## 5. THE HORROR, THE HORROR

**Vincent Price** played Richard III in *Tower of London* (1962), a melodramatic horror film that blended elements from the plots of Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*

## 6. FULL CYCLE

**Benedict Cumberbatch** will play the titular role in *Richard III*, last in the forthcoming second cycle of adaptations of Shakespeare's historical plays forming the BBC series *The Hollow Crown* (2016)

REX FEATURES/GETTY IMAGES





### 7. FACE OF FASCISM

The star-studded 1996 film of *Richard III*, set in a 1930s Britain reimagined as a fascist state, cast **Sir Ian McKellen** opposite Robert Downey Jr and Annette Bening

### 8. THE POWER OF SILENCE

**Frederick Warde** played Richard III in *The Life and Death of Richard III* (1912), believed to be the oldest surviving American silent feature film and the first such Shakespeare adaptation (though under an hour long)

### 9. THE FEMALE PERSPECTIVE

BBC One series *The White Queen* (2013), based on Philippa Gregory's novels, focused on the women caught up in the Wars of the Roses, notably Elizabeth Woodville, queen of Edward IV and mother of the princes in the Tower. **Aneurin Barnard** played Richard Duke of Gloucester, Edward's youngest brother and later King Richard III

### 10. A COMIC AND KINDLY KING

BBC comedy series *The Black Adder* (1983) reimagined a history in which the battle of Bosworth was won not by Henry Tudor but by Richard III, played by **Peter Cook** as a kindly monarch who dotes on his nephews. Rowan Atkinson was Edmund, son of an imagined King Richard IV – the younger of the princes in the Tower – portrayed by Brian Blessed



What really brought down Richard III? Explore the king's final days – and discover how his death ushered in Henry VII and the Tudor dynasty

# DOWN





# FALL

ALAMY

BBC History Magazine's **Richard III**



THE **HISTORY** ESSAY



Henry Payne’s *Plucking the Red and White Roses in the Old Temple Garden* (1910) shows noblemen declaring their allegiances by choosing blooms, an interpretation of the conflicts that is “misleading, distorted, oversimplified and – in parts – deliberately false”

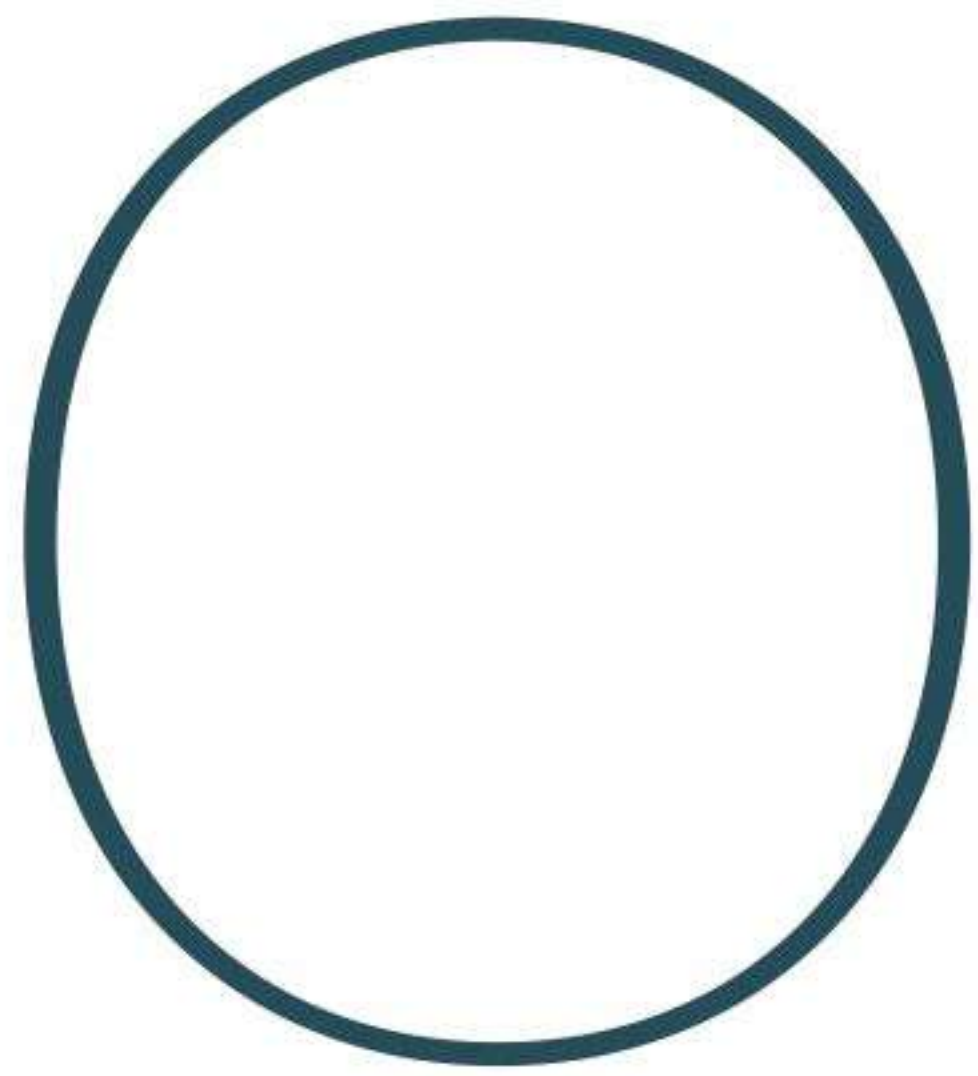
**DID THE TUDORS  
INVENT THE  
WARS OF THE ROSES?**

It was in Henry VII’s interests to play up the Wars of the Roses and the importance of Richard III’s defeat at Bosworth – and we’ve bought the lie

**By Dan Jones**

BRIDGEMAN





n an early spring day in 1592, The Rose – a theatre in the London suburb of Southwark – filled with one of the largest crowds seen that year. The men and women who crossed London Bridge and scurried into the theatre from the dirty streets lined with brothels and bear pits

had come to see *Harey the vjth*, performed by Lord Strange's Men. Today we call it *Henry VI, Part I*, by William Shakespeare.

*Harey the vjth* was a hot ticket. Its exciting storyline – noble intrigue and monarchy in peril – echoed the uncertain spirit of the 1590s. Its battle scenes made full use of the Rose's wide stage, thrilling the audience with *melées* and slaughter, explosions and duels. It was tender, too: Lord Strange's actors could move theatregoers to tears.

But there was another thrill to this new drama. *Harey the vjth* belonged to a new genre of 'history' plays, which depicted – or claimed to depict – England's recent past. In this case, the subject was the period of upheaval we now call the Wars of the Roses.

"I'll find friends to wear my bleeding roses," cries Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, in *Harey the vjth*. Standing in a rose garden, he has plucked a red flower from a great bush that stands between him and his nemesis, Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York. York has selected a white rose – "with this maiden blossom in my hand/I scorn thee," he spits – and the noblemen standing by have followed suit, choosing the colour of their rose to advertise their allegiance.

In 1592, this image made perfect sense. This was how the Wars of the Roses were generally understood. Against the backdrop of weak kingship and disastrous military defeat in France, two rival branches of the Plantagenet dynasty – Lancaster and York – had gone to war for the throne, using red and white roses as emblems of their causes. The war had shattered the country, causing tens of thousands of deaths and incalculable misery.

Only after decades of chaos had the family rift been healed by the victory of a Lancastrian, Henry Tudor, over a Yorkist, Richard III, at Bosworth in 1485. Henry's victory, and his subsequent marriage to Elizabeth of York, reconciled the warring factions. Thus had been created the red-and-white 'Tudor rose' that seemed to be painted everywhere, reminding the populace that the Tudors stood for unity, reconciliation, peace and the incontestable right to rule.

It was a powerful and easily grasped story that, by Shakespeare's day, had already been in circulation for 100 years. And, in part thanks to the success of Shakespeare's brilliant cycle of history plays, this vision of the Wars of the Roses remains in circulation – on television, in film and in popular historical fiction.

Lancaster versus York, red versus white: it is a story as easy to grasp as a football match at the end of which everyone swaps shirts. Yet it is misleading, distorted, oversimplified and – in parts – deliberately false.

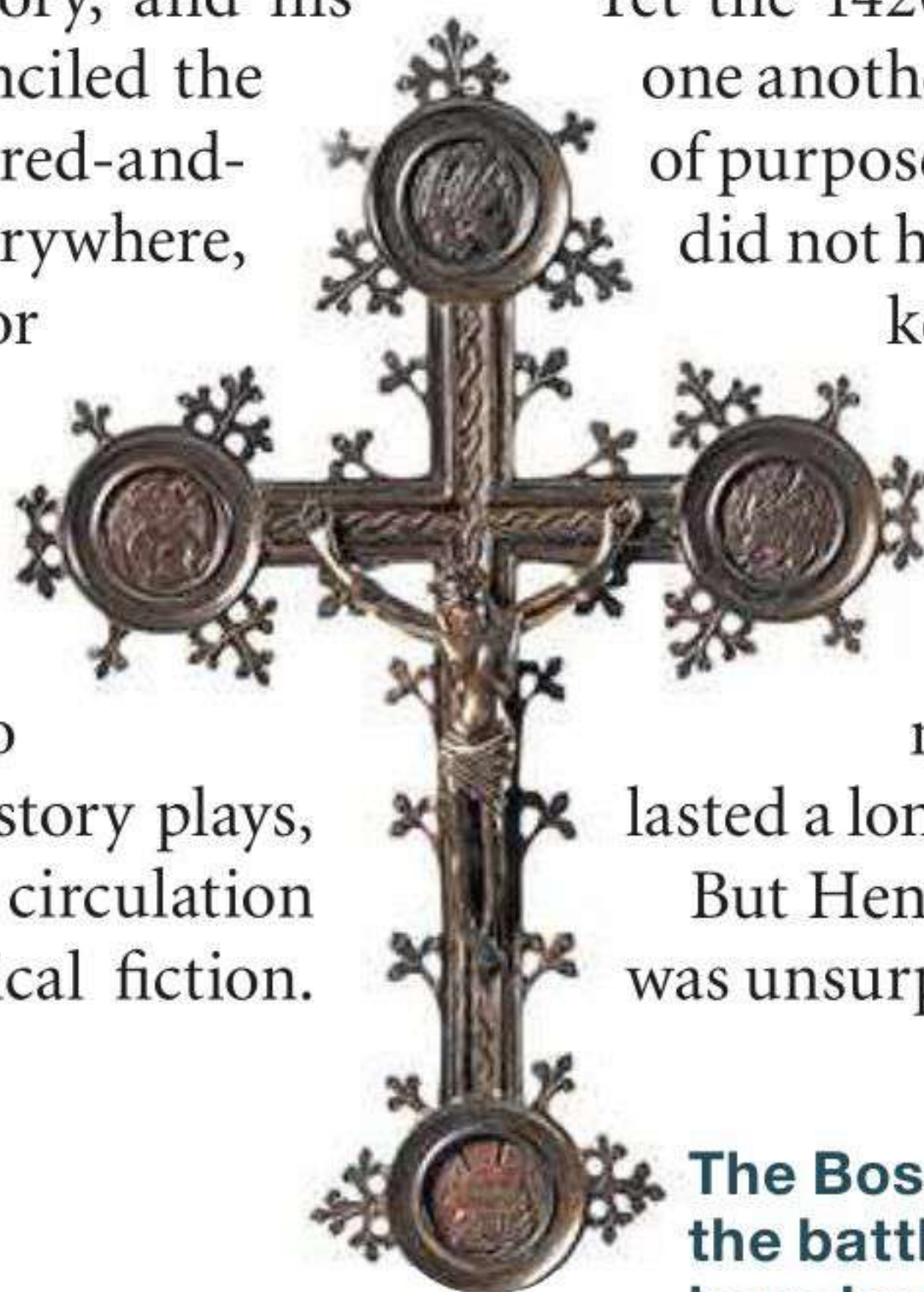
In England, the 14th century ended badly – with regicide. Richard II, having been deposed by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, was murdered in prison during the early days of 1400. The usurper Henry IV endured a troubled reign, but his son, Henry V, achieved stunning successes in the wars with France – notably the battle of Agincourt in 1415 and the treaty of Troyes in 1420, by which Henry V laid claim to the French crown for his descendants.

But in 1422 Henry V died of dysentery. His heir was a nine-month-old son, Henry VI, whose birthright – the dual monarchy – required the men around him both to pursue an expensive defensive war in France and also to keep order in an England that was fairly groaning with dukes, earls and bishops of royal blood. Disaster surely loomed.

Or did it? It is often assumed that the Wars of the Roses began simply because, by the 15th century, there were too many men of royal blood clustering around the crown, vying for power and influence over a weak-willed king. Yet if that were the case, civil war would have broken out straight after Henry V's death. The baby king was watched over by two charismatic and extremely 'royal' uncles, John, Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. In addition, many more adult relatives of royal descent were expecting a stake in power, including Cardinal Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, who maintained a bitter feud with Gloucester.

Yet the 1420s saw no serious unrest. Rather than fighting one another, the English nobles showed a remarkable unity of purpose at the moment of greatest royal weakness. They did not hive off into dynastic factions, but stuck together, kept the peace and attempted to preserve a normal system of royal government. Even when men came to blows, as Beaufort and Humphrey did in 1424, the violence was quickly stopped and the protagonists reprimanded. There were no roses. There was no blood. And this peace lasted a long time.

But Henry VI grew up a very strange man. Perhaps this was unsurprising: denied the apprenticeship of princedom,



**The Bosworth Crucifix, found at, or near to, the battlefield site in the 18th century, may have been carried by Richard III's retinue**



“Though the white rose was one of a number of badges used by York and his family, the ‘Lancastrian’ royal family never used the red rose as a symbol during the conflict”

child kings tended not to become very able rulers – witness Henry III and Richard II. Yet no medieval English king was ever as weak as the adult Henry VI.

He was indecisive, absent, vague and naïve, an impossibly innocent and squeamish king whose flaws could be explained by embarrassed courtiers only in terms of his great personal piousness. But this was of little use in winning a war with France, and Henry’s gentle, bovine incompetence and lack of military leadership soon became a terrible problem.

Henry was anointed king of France in 1431, but never fought for his crown. At home, meanwhile, he was hopeless: unable to offer any direction to government, unable to keep the peace between noble families who fell out (such as the Bonville and Courtenay families in south-west England, and the Neville and Percy clans in the north) and incapable of choosing wisely between competing counsellors.

Yet Henry’s weak kingship did not immediately cause a dynastic war. England coped for a remarkably long time – thanks chiefly to the efforts of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk. With offices in the royal household, a post on the royal council, a close personal relationship with Henry VI and a substantial array of landholdings across southern and eastern England, Suffolk directed royal government from behind the scenes to an increasing extent through the 1440s, tacitly supported by a large group of other nobles. By the time Suffolk fell from power (impeached by parliament and murdered by rebellious sailors

off the coast of Kent in May 1450), Henry VI’s reign was 28 years old – yet still there had been no civil war.

What had happened, however, was a devastating English collapse in France. It began around 1429 with the arrival of Joan of Arc before the walls of Orléans, continued with the gradual loss of Normandy to the forces of Charles VII of France, and ended on 17 July 1453 with humiliation and defeat at the battle of Castillon, when the renowned captain John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, was killed.

This war rocked English pride, wrought havoc on royal finances and created personal feuds (but not dynastic rivalry) between men such as Richard, Duke of York, and Edmund, Duke of Somerset. It also sent Henry VI mad.

Henry’s illness rendered him catatonic. It came in bouts, the first in 1453–54, and it emboldened his enemies, resulting in civil war. At the first battle of St Albans on 22 May 1455, the king’s cousin, Richard of York, and his allies including Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick – the ‘Kingmaker’ – defeated forces led by Somerset. What followed, it’s usually suggested, was 30 years of intermittent civil war in which York fought Lancaster, the crown changed hands and eventually the Tudors won at Bosworth. But it wasn’t quite that simple.

**W**e will understand the Wars of the Roses better if we divide them into four phases.

During the first, from 1455 to 1460, there was a confused attempt to vie for control of government.

Richard of York argued that his great aristocratic lineage and proximity to the king in blood (as third cousin, once removed, on his mother’s side) gave him the right to steer government during the king’s incapacity. Queen Margaret, though, jealously defended her own rights and those of her infant son, Edward, Prince of Wales, by allying with the Beaufort family and others. This was not chiefly a dynastic conflict, though all protagonists had royal blood, but a tussle for political dominance.

This phase came to an abrupt end in 1460 when York, having been defeated in battle at Ludford Bridge the previous year, realised he could now never be reconciled with the indignant queen, and assumed that his only hope for survival lay in escalating the argument. Fatally, he decided to claim the crown itself. When Neville defeated a royal army at Northampton, Henry VI was forced to disinherit Prince Edward and appoint York and his descendants to the royal succession.

Then – and only then – the wars became dynastic. And it is worth noting that, though the white rose was one of a number of badges used by York and his family, the ‘Lancastrian’ royal family never used the red rose as a symbol during the conflict.

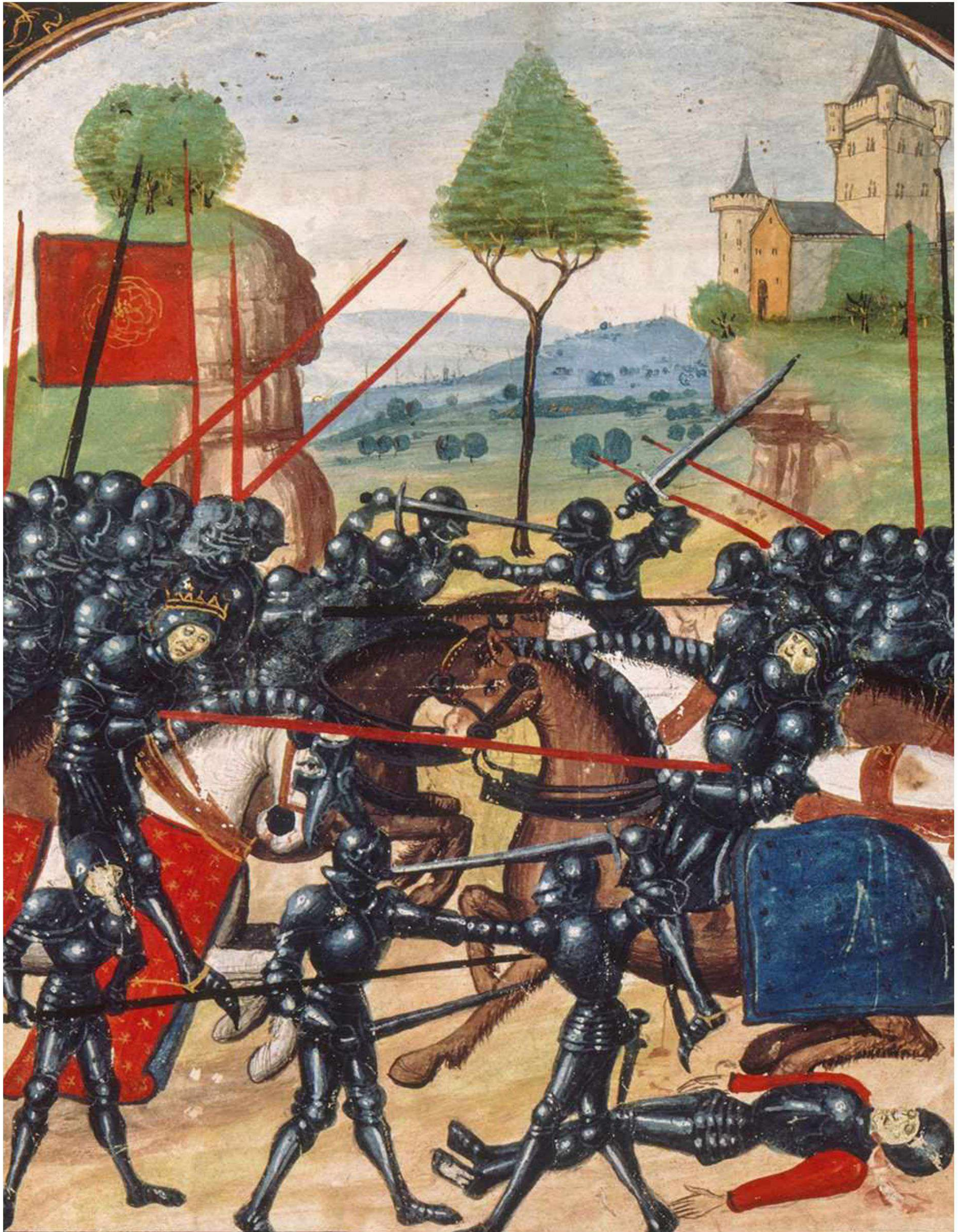
This second phase lasted about a decade. York died at the battle of Wakefield in 1460, but his son Edward took up his royal claim and, after victories at the battles of Mortimer’s Cross and



**A portrait of Henry VI. For all his frailties, Henry’s accession didn’t pitch England into dynastic war. In fact, at the start of his reign, the nobility showed “a remarkable unity of purpose”**

ALAMY





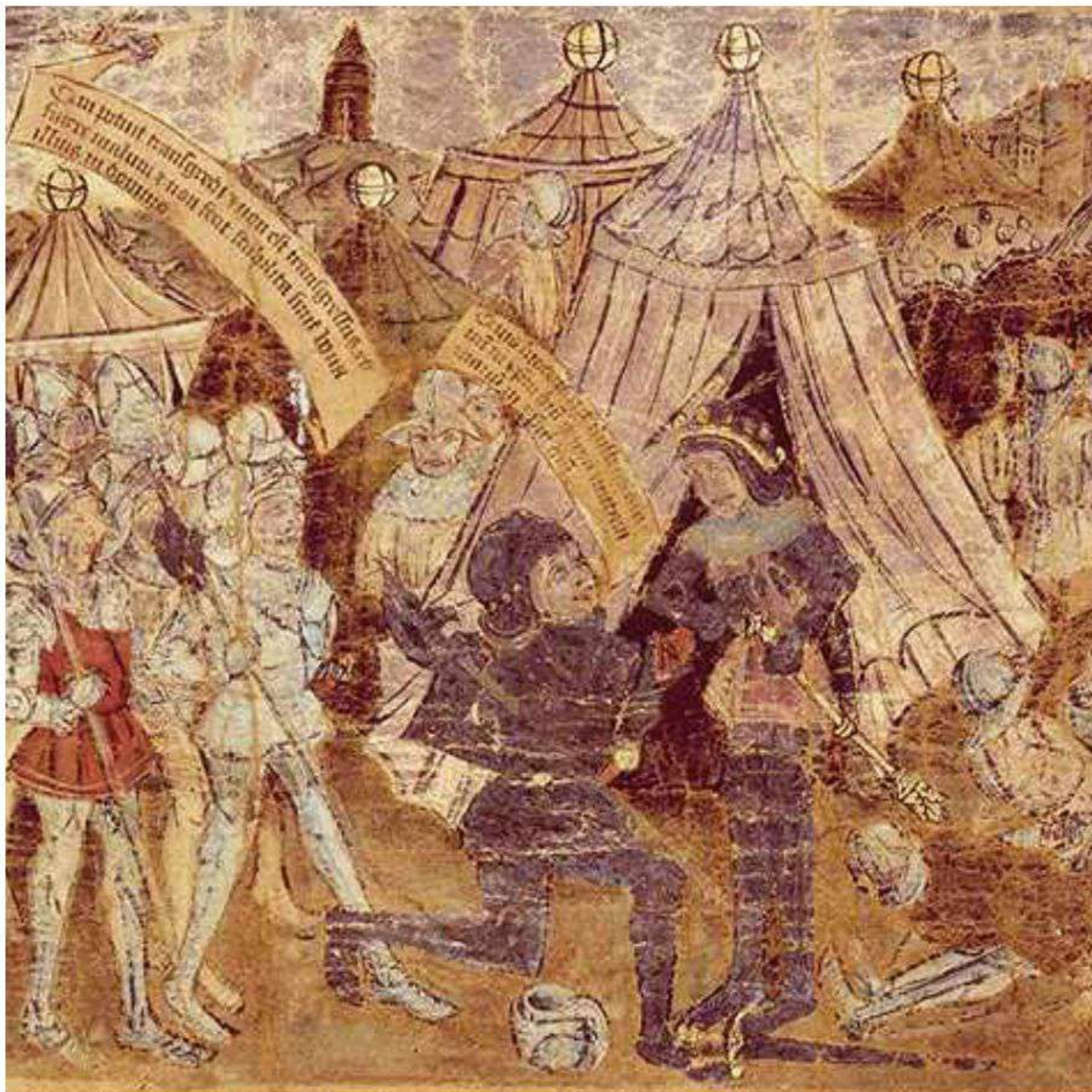
BRIDGEMAN

This 15th-century miniature depicts Edward IV striking Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick – the ‘Kingmaker’ – with a lance during his victory at the battle of Barnet in 1471. The fall of Warwick fatally weakened the Lancastrians, leading to 14 years of Yorkist rule



## THE HISTORY ESSAY

“After securing victory, the Tudors devoted a great deal of energy and propaganda to portraying Bosworth as the end of the story – but in a sense it was only the beginning”



**Henry VI is captured at the battle of Northampton in 1460, bringing the first phase of the Wars of the Roses to an end**

Towton in 1461, took the throne as Edward IV. Yet he had neither killed nor captured Henry VI or Prince Edward, so spent the first 10 years of his reign fighting to secure his crown. He won battles at Hexham and Hedgeley Moor, and wed a ‘Lancastrian’ – a widowed minor noblewoman, Elizabeth Woodville – pre-empting Henry VII’s inter-factional marriage by more than 20 years. Alas, no intertwined roses were produced – and Edward’s omission would be the Tudors’ gain.

Edward’s reign was not straightforward. He was forced from the throne in 1470, when the disgruntled Warwick defected to Queen Margaret and helped her restore the moth-eaten Henry VI. But Edward struck back – conclusively. In 1471 he killed Warwick at the battle of Barnet and Prince Edward at Tewkesbury, and had Henry VI murdered in the Tower of London. This marked an end to this truly ‘dynastic’ phase of the Wars of the Roses: one side was comprehensively defeated, the other had comprehensively won.

Yet, as we know, that was not the end. A third phase began in 1483 after Edward IV’s death when Richard III usurped the throne, reopening the old wounds of 1460–71. Whatever his arguments for seizing the crown – almost uniformly specious – the new Yorkist king’s brutal power-grab and the dreadful fate met by the princes in the Tower created a huge faction of implacable opponents who preferred to see anyone but Richard in charge. It was in this context that they turned to Henry Tudor, a Welshman who had lived much of his life under house arrest in Brittany.

This brief third phase of 1483–85 was also not dynastic. It was confused, desperate, opportunistic and lucky. Henry Tudor’s

Lancastrian royal lineage was threadbare (he had a better claim to the French throne than the English), and his main attraction was his promise to marry Edward IV’s daughter, Elizabeth of York, and continue the ‘true’ legacy of the old king. This made him useful to the angry Yorkists, and earned him just enough support from exiled Edwardians to make invasion possible.

In 1485, Henry won at Bosworth. It was a close-run battle that could easily have gone the other way, but he killed Richard III and took the crown – and then, true to his word, he married Elizabeth of York. The Tudors subsequently devoted a great deal of energy and propaganda to portraying Bosworth as the end of the story – but in a sense it was only the beginning.

Henry VII was acutely aware of how hard he would have to fight to keep his crown. His success at Bosworth was impressive, but it also encouraged others to see the English crown as a bauble, a thing so denuded that anyone with a drop of royal blood could raise an army and take it. One by one, they tried. So began the fourth phase of the Wars of the Roses in 1485; it lasted for at least 30 years.

In 1487 John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln invaded England with the pretender Lambert Simnel (who claimed to be Edward IV’s nephew Edward, Earl of Warwick) and a gang of Swiss mercenaries. Henry defeated them at the battle of Stoke Field, but others continued to plague him. Perkin Warbeck pretended to be Edward IV’s younger son, Prince Richard; he was sponsored by Edward IV’s sister Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, and raised an army that disrupted the whole of south-west England before he was captured in 1497.

Warbeck was executed in 1499, alongside the real Edward, Earl of Warwick, who had lived his whole life in prison and certainly offered no genuine threat to Henry beyond his potential as a figurehead for further rebellion. Yet these deaths did little to calm Tudor minds. As Henry VII’s reign progressed, he devoted much time and money to continuing to fight the Wars of the Roses.

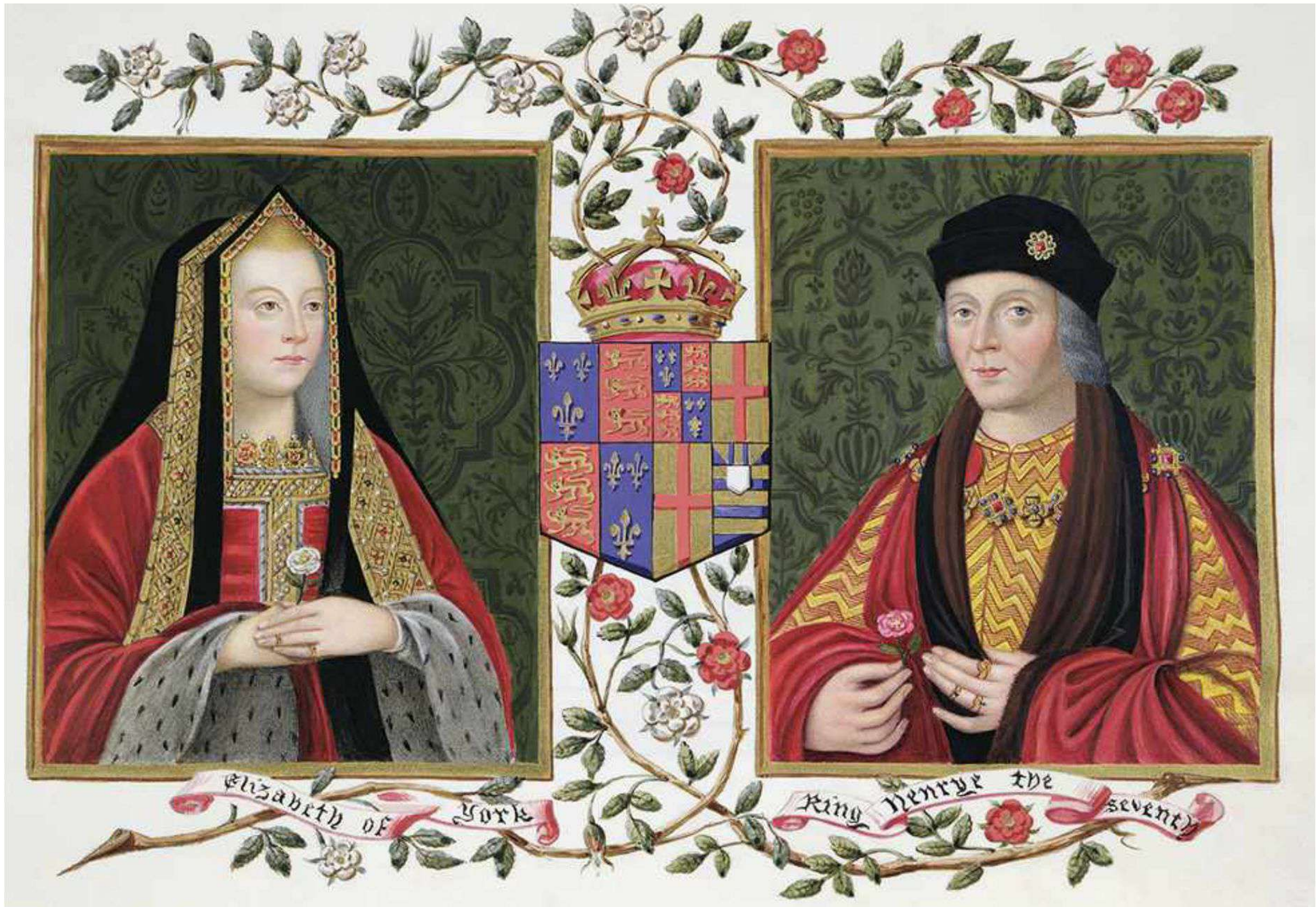
The Tudor rose appeared everywhere, its implied narrative of ‘families reunited’ popping up in cathedral doorways, the margins of prayerbooks and manuscripts in the royal library. The king’s second son, Prince Henry, was created Duke of York in 1494 to try to shut down all other claims to that family’s legacy. Potential rivals, however minor, were mercilessly hunted. Edmund de la Pole, a nephew of Edward IV who had fled the realm, was captured in 1506 and remained imprisoned for life. The warning to others was clear.

This paranoia outlived Henry VII. His son Henry VIII grew up fearing the spectral ‘Yorkists’ and, like his father, treated them mercilessly. Henry had Edmund de la Pole summarily beheaded in 1513. He hounded Edmund’s brother, Richard de la Pole, across Europe, and celebrated heartily on learning of his death at the battle of Pavia in 1525. In 1541, the 67-year-old Margaret Pole, one of the last living nieces of Edward IV, was hacked to death in the Tower by a novice axeman, a spectacle that shocked Europe. Margaret was branded a potentially

THE BRITISH LIBRARY–AKG IMAGES



“The Tudor rose appeared everywhere, its implied narrative of ‘families reunited’ popping up in cathedral doorways, the margins of prayerbooks and manuscripts in the royal library”



Portraits of Elizabeth of York and Henry VII are combined in a 19th-century watercolour by Sarah, Countess of Essex. The motif of intertwined red and white roses was earlier used in a street pageant during the coronation of Elizabeth I

rebellious Catholic, but her fate was almost certainly decided by the fact that she was – in theory, at least – a Yorkist.

By the time Margaret Pole died, the Wars of the Roses had all but sputtered out. Yet for half a century they had been a vital part of the Tudors’ programme of self-justification. It was this part of the war that had been the most overtly ‘dynastic’, and it is no surprise that historians writing in the mid-16th century viewed the 15th century through that lens. Edward Hall’s huge chronicle history of England called (to give it its short title) *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and Yorke* gave a decidedly ‘Tudor’ version of events. Hall was followed by writers such as Raphael Holinshed, who provided source material for Shakespeare. By the 1590s, history had been determined – even if it had been somewhat warped in the process.

A middle-aged theatregoer watching *Harey the vjth* in 1592 might have remembered the coronation of Elizabeth. Perhaps, as they watched York and Somerset pluck white and red roses from a bush, they recalled a stage that stood on Fenchurch Street during the coronation. On it was a representation of

English royal history as an intertwining rose, with branches of red and white blooms writhing together and emerging as one plant in the person of Henry VIII.

They could have reflected on how poetically neat English history in the 15th century had been, and how consistent it had been in the telling ever since. It is testament to the power of that original Tudor myth that it persists to this day. **H**

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**Dan Jones** is a historian and journalist. He is the author of *The Plantagenets: The Kings Who Made England* (William Collins, 2013) and *Magna Carta* (Head of Zeus, 2014)

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOK

► **The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and the Rise of the Tudors** by Dan Jones (Faber, 2014)

##### LISTEN AGAIN

► Melvyn Bragg and guests discuss the Wars of the Roses on **In Our Time** at [bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00546sp](http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00546sp)





# TREACH

WHAT REALLY  
BROUGHT DOWN  
RICHARD III





Richard III remained unaware of the threat posed by Sir William Stanley (shown top left) at Bosworth Field – until it was too late

# ERY

The king might well have won the battle of Bosworth – had he not been betrayed.

**David Hipshon**

shows how Richard's intervention in a local power struggle led to his downfall



On 22 August 1485, in marshy fields near the village of Sutton Cheney, Leicestershire, Richard III led the last charge of knights in English history. A circlet

of gold around his helmet, his banners flying, he threw his destiny into the hands of the god of battles.

Among the astonished observers of this glittering panoply of horses and steel galloping towards them were Sir William Stanley and his brother Thomas, whose forces had hitherto taken no part in the action. Both watched intently as Richard swept across their front and headed towards Henry Tudor, bent only on eliminating his rival.

As the king battled his way through Henry's bodyguard, killing the latter's standard bearer with his own hand and coming within feet of Tudor himself, William Stanley made his move. Throwing his forces at the king's back, he betrayed him and had him hacked him down. Richard, fighting manfully and crying, "Treason! Treason!", was butchered in the bloodstained mud of Bosworth Field by a man who was, ostensibly at least, there to support him.

Historians have been tempted to see Stanley's treachery as merely the last act in the short and brutal drama that encompassed the reign of the most controversial king in English history. Most agree that Richard had murdered his two nephews in the Tower of London, and that this heinous crime so shocked the realm,



# The battle of Bosworth Field

22 August 1485

**T**he battle of Bosworth was one of the most decisive clashes ever fought on English soil. Richard III's army outnumbered Henry Tudor's by at least two to one, Richard commanding something in the region of 12,000 men while Henry had approximately 6,000. Richard's problem was that most of his troops did not engage with the enemy, some because of poor positioning and others through disloyalty.

John Howard, Duke of Norfolk, led the Yorkist front line, while John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, opposed him for Henry Tudor. As the vanguards clashed it soon became apparent that Oxford, Henry's experienced commander, had the advantage – for one thing, he may have been accompanied by professional pikemen from France. Hand-to-hand fighting lasted for about an hour, during which Norfolk was killed and the centre of the Yorkist line began to collapse. Command of the vanguard fell to Norfolk's son, Thomas, Earl of Surrey, but he failed to rally his men.

Richard had to act quickly and launched his spectacular charge of household knights. Leading from the front and wearing a specially fitted crown around his helmet, he skirting the main battle and headed directly for his rival. The speed and sound of this thunderous spectacle must have caused great alarm. Rather than seeing this as a panic reaction it should be remembered that horses galloping across a field were the fastest and deadliest way of delivering a decisive blow. The horse was not superseded for this purpose until the 20th century, when armoured vehicles finally spared them.

Richard's mind may have been full of echoes of a chivalric past, but his military instincts were sound.

One reason for the timing of the charge may have been the realisation that Henry Tudor, accompanied by a relatively small force, had become dangerously isolated from the main body of his army and Oxford's forward thrust. He moved closer to the Stanley forces, perhaps to sound out their intentions.

Richard's charge not only split Stanley from Tudor, it also pitted the inexperienced Henry against a formidable fighting unit. The king almost reached Henry and very nearly succeeded in his objective – he would certainly have done so if Sir William Stanley had not betrayed him and come to Henry's rescue. His vastly superior numbers overwhelmed Richard's knights and attacked them from behind. Stanley's swift and decisive intervention suggests that he had been waiting for the chance. It's even possible that it was a trap.

The king battled on, killing both Henry Tudor's standard bearer and bodyguard. However, now unhorsed, Richard was surrounded and killed, "fighting manfully in the press", his body then stripped and slung over a horse.

With Richard dead, his army melted away. Tradition tells us that one of the Stanleys, finding Richard's crown, took it to Henry and crowned him on the battlefield. Crown Hill still exists in the vicinity to this day. This act, if it happened, was presumptuous and illegal; Henry had won the right to rule but Stanley was not an archbishop.

Henry Percy's northerners, the bulk of Richard's fighting force, slipped away

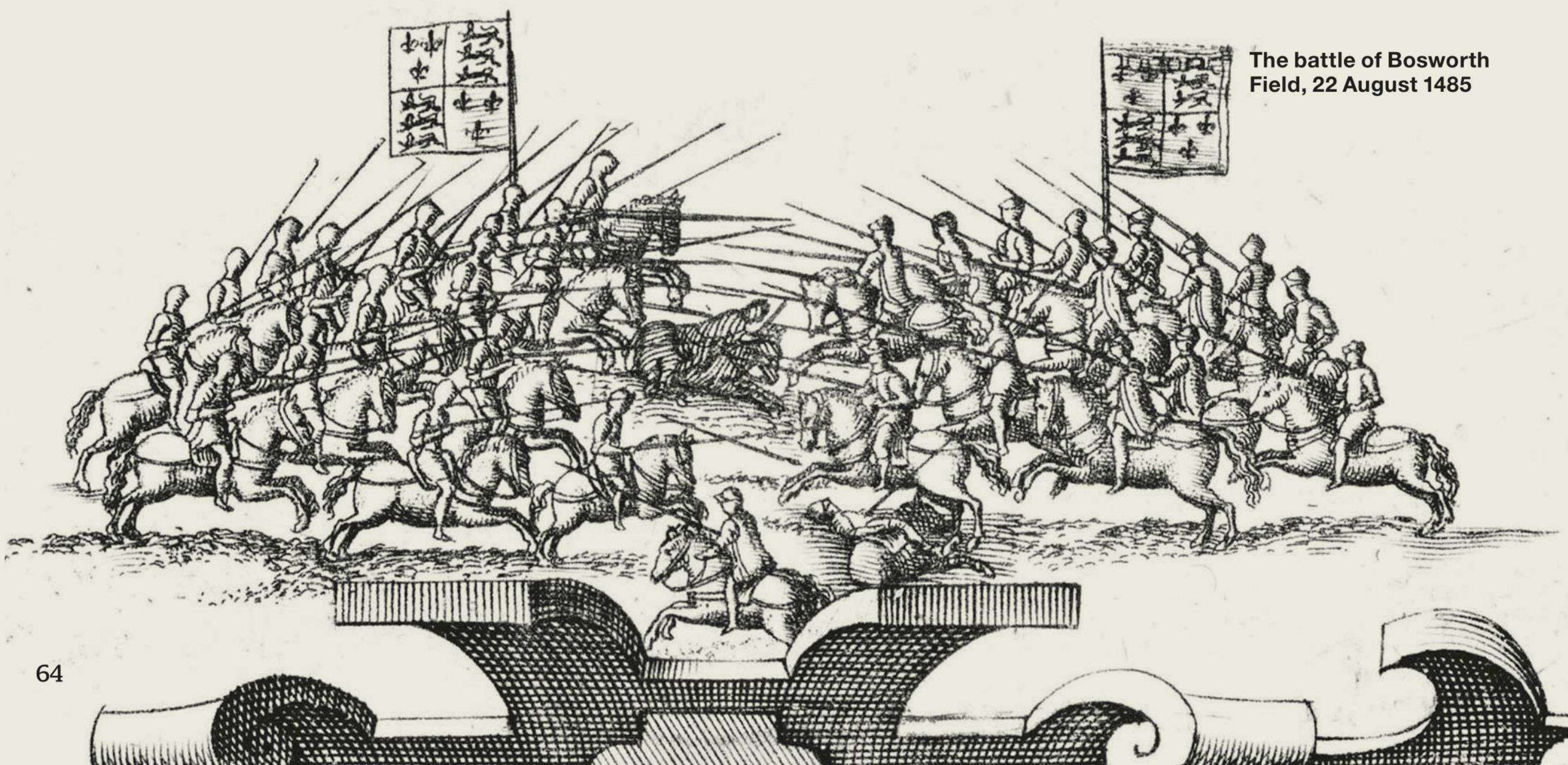
## Wars of the Roses battlefields



without striking a blow. Percy was lynched in Yorkshire four years later and some have seen a connection. As for Henry Tudor, by dating his reign from the day before the battle, he made every man who had served his king at Bosworth, even unto death, a traitor: a rather sordid and cynical start to 118 years of Tudor rule.

The Tudor propaganda machine began to spin against Richard almost immediately after Bosworth, but even the most vitriolic of his detractors admitted that he died fighting heroically. He was the last king of England to do so and, thanks to the Tudors, was the only monarch to have no grave – until his reinterment at Leicester Cathedral in March 2015.

TOP PHOTO



The battle of Bosworth Field, 22 August 1485



even in those medieval days, that his demise was all but assured. The reason he lost at Bosworth, they say, was because he had sacrificed support through this illegal coup.

Hidden among the manuscripts in the duchy of Lancaster records in the National Archives, however, lies a story that provides an insight into the *real* reason why Thomas, Lord Stanley, and his brother William betrayed Richard at Bosworth. The records reveal that, for more than 20 years before the battle, a struggle for power in the hills of Lancashire had lit a fuse which exploded at Bosworth.

The Stanleys had spent most of the 15th century building up a powerful concentration of estates in west Lancashire, Cheshire and north Wales. As their power grew they came into conflict with gentry families in east Lancashire who resented their acquisitive and relentless encroachments into their lands. One such family was the Harringtons of Hornby. Unlike their Stanley rivals, the Harringtons sided with the Yorkists in the Wars of the Roses and remained staunchly loyal. Unfortunately, at the battle of Wakefield in 1460, disaster struck. The Duke of York was killed – and with him, Thomas Harrington and his son John.

The Stanleys managed, as ever, to miss the battle. They were very keen, though, to pick up the pieces of the Harrington inheritance and take their seat at Hornby, a magnificent castle that dominated the valley of the River Lune in Stanley country.

When John Harrington had been killed at Wakefield, the only heirs he left behind were two small girls. They had the legal right to inherit the castle at Hornby, but it would pass to whomever they married. Thomas, Lord Stanley, immediately sought

“For more than 20 years before the battle **a struggle for power in the hills of Lancashire** had lit a fuse that exploded at Bosworth”

to take them as his wards and to marry them as soon as possible to his only son and a nephew.

John Harrington’s brother James was equally determined to stop him. James argued that his brother had died before their father at Wakefield and so he himself, as the oldest surviving son, had become the heir, not John’s daughters. To make good his claim he took possession of the girls and fortified Hornby against the Stanleys. Unfortunately for Harrington, King Edward IV – striving to bring order to a country devastated by civil strife – simply could not afford to lose the support of a powerful regional magnate, and awarded the castle to Stanley.

That was by no means the end of the matter, though. James Harrington refused to budge. He held on to Hornby, and his nieces. What’s more, the records show that friction between the two families escalated to alarming proportions during the 1460s.

In the archive of the letters patent and warrants, issued under the duchy of Lancaster seal, we can see the King struggling – and failing – to maintain order in the region. While James Harrington fortified his castle and dug his heels in,

Stanley refused to allow his brother, Robert Harrington, to exercise the hereditary offices of bailiff in Blackburn and Amounderness, which he had acquired by marriage. Stanley falsely indicted the Harringtons, packed the juries and attempted to imprison them.

This virtual state of war became a real conflict in 1469 when, in a monumental fit of pique, the Earl of Warwick – the most powerful magnate in the land, with massive estates in Yorkshire, Wales and the Midlands – rebelled against his cousin Edward IV. The revolt saw the former king, the hapless Henry VI, dragged out of the Tower and put back on the throne. Stanley, who had married Warwick’s sister, Eleanor Neville, stood to gain by joining the rebellion.

There were now two kings in England – and Edward was facing a bitter battle to regain control. In an attempt to secure the northwest, he placed his hopes on his younger brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester, the future King Richard III. This had immediate consequences for both Lord Stanley and James Harrington. Richard displaced the former as forester of Amounderness, Blackburn and Bowland, and appointed the latter as his deputy steward in the forest of Bowland, an extensive region to the south of Hornby. Even worse (from Stanley’s point of view, at least): the castle of Hornby was in Amounderness, where Richard now had important legal rights.

During the rebellion, Stanley tried to dislodge James once and for all by bringing a massive cannon called ‘Mile Ende’ from Bristol to blast the fortifications. The only clue we have as to why this failed is a warrant issued by Richard, dated 26 March

## Timeline: Wars of the Roses

**1453**

**Sir John Talbot is killed** at the Battle of Castillon and all English possessions in France, apart from Calais, are lost. The Hundred Years’ War comes to an end. **Henry VI** goes insane and **Richard, Duke of York**, demands reform. The rival houses of Lancaster and York move towards confrontation.



Henry VI of England (1421–71)

**1455**

The Duke of York defeats the Lancastrians at the first battle of St Albans. **The Wars of the Roses begin.** Henry VI is captured in his tent. **Margaret of Anjou**, wife of Henry VI, becomes the champion of the Lancastrians and is determined that her son, Edward, will succeed his father.



Queen Margaret, wife of Henry VI

**1460**

**York**, after being forced to flee to Ireland, returns to claim the crown following the Earl of Warwick’s defeat of Margaret at the battle of Northampton. Parliament resists his claim but makes him heir to Henry VI. **Margaret**, mustering an army in the north, **defeats and kills York at the Battle of Wakefield.**



# Richard's chivalry

## THE GALLANT EXPLOITS THAT KILLED A KING

**T**he fateful charge of knights at Bosworth may have been a risky strategy but it chimed perfectly with Richard III's concept of himself: the chivalric 'good lord' fighting his enemies with his faithful companions at his side.

Richard's father, the Duke of York, who was adopted as a four year-old orphan by the great warrior-king Henry V, evinced an old-fashioned, almost archaic concept of chivalry. He had been killed when Richard was only eight but had left a powerful impression on the young boy.

In 1476 Richard presided over a solemn ceremony, redolent with pageantry and symbolism, commemorating the reburial of his father at the family seat at Fotheringhay in Northamptonshire. An endowment of four priests at Queen's College Cambridge specified that they should pray "for the soule of the right high and mighty prince of blessed memorie Richard duke of Yorke".

Richard III believed that his father had died fighting to restore the realm to its former glory after years of corruption

and ineptitude. After his father's death at the Battle of Wakefield, the family had been forced to flee to the court of Philip the Good of Burgundy, where an almost fantasy world of courtly etiquette and chivalric exploits was fostered. The young Duke of Gloucester possessed a 12th-century romance of the perfect knight, Ipomedon, and in his copy he had written *tant le disiree* ("I have desired it so much.") The motto he used, *loyaulte me lie* ("loyalty binds me"), has that same sense of craving for a lost idealism.

Philip the Good of Burgundy (third from left) sheltered the young Richard during his exile

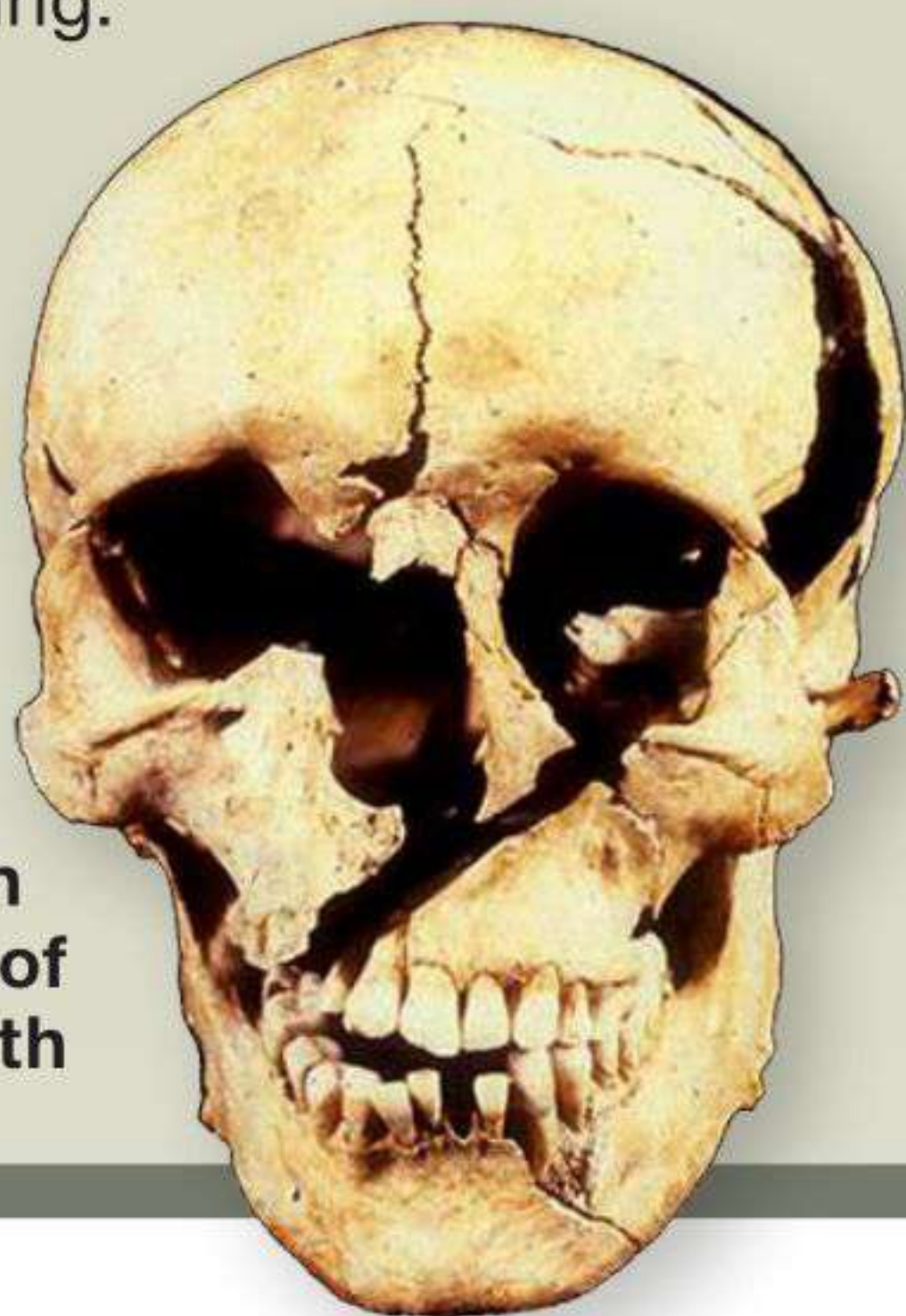


BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY/ART ARCHIVE/TOWTON ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST/TOPFOTO

### 1461

York's son, **Edward**, defeats the Lancastrians at Mortimer's Cross and is proclaimed king. **Warwick**, his cousin, having been defeated at the second battle of St Albans, joins Edward and they **defeat the Lancastrians at Towton** – the bloodiest battle ever fought on English soil.

A skull from a Towton burial pit bears marks of a violent death



### 1469

**Warwick**, disillusioned by Edward's secret marriage to Elizabeth Woodville, his loss of influence and the King's anti-French policy, persuades Clarence, the King's brother, to join him in rebellion. The King's army is defeated at Edgecote and **Warwick 'the Kingmaker' imprisons Edward**.

### 1470

Warwick is forced to release Edward to deal with a northern revolt, and his own army is routed by Edward at Losecoat Field. Fleeing abroad, **Warwick is reconciled with Margaret of Anjou** and returns with her to England. **Edward**, in turn, has to flee. The re-adoption of Henry VI begins.

### 1471

Landing in Yorkshire, **Edward reclaims the throne and kills Warwick** at the Battle of Barnet. Edward marches to meet Margaret and at the battle of Tewkesbury defeats her, **kills her son and finally executes Henry VI**. His second reign begins and peace is restored.



1470, and signed “at Hornby”. It would appear that the 17-year-old Richard had taken sides and was helping James Harrington in his struggle against Stanley. This is hardly surprising: James’s father and brother had died with Richard’s father at Wakefield, and the Harringtons were actively helping Edward to reclaim his throne. In short, it seems that in Richard the Harringtons had a royal ally who could challenge the hegemony of the Stanleys and help them resist Thomas’s ambitions.

The Harringtons’ support for Edward was to prove of little immediate benefit when the King finally won his throne back, after defeating and killing Warwick at the battle of Barnet and executing Henry VI. Grateful he may have been, but the harsh realities of the situation forced Edward to appease the Stanleys – they could command more men than the Harringtons – and in a settlement of 1473 James Harrington was forced to surrender Hornby. Richard ensured that James received the compensation of the nearby property of Farleton, and also land in west Yorkshire, but by the time Edward died in 1483 Stanley had still not handed over the lucrative and extensive rights that Robert Harrington claimed in Blackburn and Amounderness.

One thing, however, had changed. The leading gentry families in the region had found a ‘good lord’ in Richard. He had been made chief steward of the duchy in the north in place of Warwick and used his power of appointment to foster members of the gentry and to check the power of Stanley. Only royal power could do this, and Richard, as trusted brother of the king, used it freely. The Dacres, Huddlestons, Pilkingtons, Ratcliffes and Parrs, all related by marriage to the Harringtons, had

“It seems that in Richard the Harringtons had a royal ally who could challenge the hegemony of the Stanleys”

received offices in the region and saw Richard, not Stanley, as their lord.

When Richard took the throne he finally had the power to do something for James Harrington. The evidence shows that he planned to reopen the question of the Hornby inheritance. This alone would have been anathema to Stanley but it was accompanied by an alarming series of appointments in the duchy of Lancaster.

John Huddleston, a kinsman of the Harringtons, was made sheriff of Cumberland, steward of Penrith and warden of the west march. John Pilkington, brother-in-law of Robert Harrington, was steward of Rochdale and became Richard III’s chamberlain; Richard Ratcliffe, Robert Harrington’s wife’s uncle, was the King’s deputy in the west march and became sheriff of Westmorland. Stanley felt squeezed, his power threatened and his influence diminished.

It’s worth remembering, too, that Lord Stanley was Henry Tudor’s stepfather, having married Margaret Beaufort in 1472.

With Richard at Bosworth was a close-knit group of gentry who served in the royal household: men like John Huddleston, Thomas Pilkington and Richard Ratcliffe. They were men whom Richard could trust, but also the men

who were instrumental in reducing Stanley’s power in the northwest. By Richard’s side, possibly carrying his standard, was James Harrington. When Richard III sped past the Stanleys at Bosworth Field he presented them with an opportunity too tempting to refuse.

During the 1470s Richard had become the dominant power in the north as Edward’s lieutenant. He served his brother faithfully and built up a strong and stable following. The leading gentry families could serve royal authority without an intermediary. The losers in this new dispensation were the two northern magnates, Henry Percy and Thomas Stanley. Richard challenged their power and at Bosworth they got their revenge.

The Harringtons, too, were to pay a heavy price for the failed horse charge at Bosworth and the Yorkists’ subsequent defeat. After the battle, Thomas Stanley received possession of all the Harrington properties and became earl of Derby.

When Richard rode into battle, with Harrington by his side, loyalty, fidelity and trust rode with him. Like the golden crown on Richard’s head, they came crashing down to earth. **H**

Dr David Hipshon is assistant headteacher at St James Senior Boys’ School in Twickenham

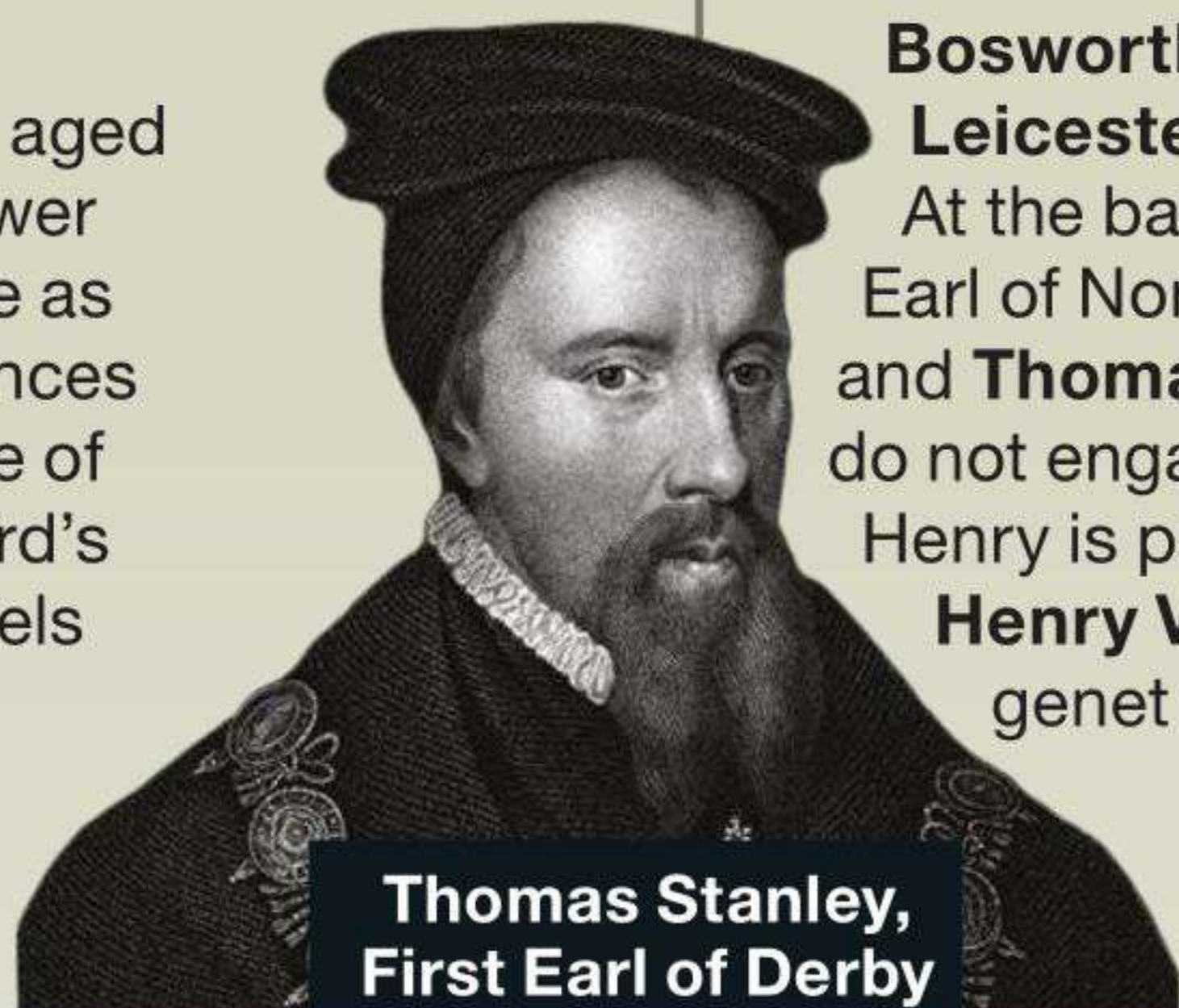
#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOKS

- ▶ **Richard III and the Death of Chivalry** by David Hipshon (The History Press, 2009)
- ▶ **Richard III: A Royal Enigma** by Sean Cunningham (The National Archives, 2003)
- ▶ **Bosworth 1485: Psychology of a Battle** by Michael K Jones (Tempus, 2002)
- ▶ **Richard III: A Medieval Kingship** by John Gillingham, ed. (Collins and Brown, 1993)

**1483**

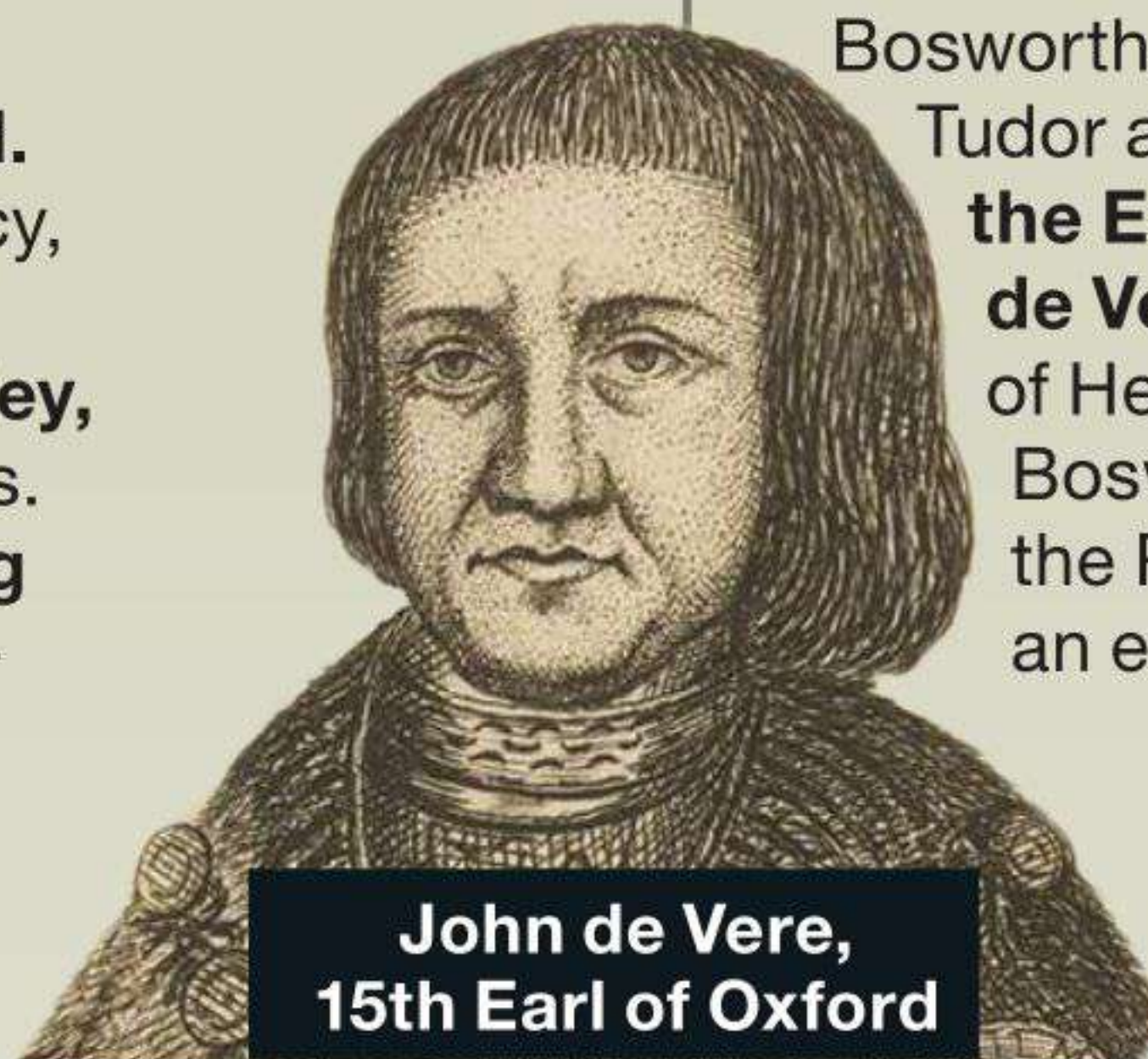
**Edward IV dies** in his bed at the age of 40. His brother, Richard Duke of Gloucester, puts Edward’s two sons, aged 12 and 10, in the Tower and takes the throne as **Richard III**. The Princes disappear. The Duke of Buckingham, Richard’s chief supporter, rebels and is executed.



Thomas Stanley,  
First Earl of Derby

**1485**

Henry Tudor lands in Wales and claims the throne. **Richard meets him at the Battle of Bosworth Field near Leicester and is killed.** At the battle Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and **Thomas, Lord Stanley**, do not engage their troops. Henry is proclaimed **King Henry VII**. The Plantagenet dynasty ends.



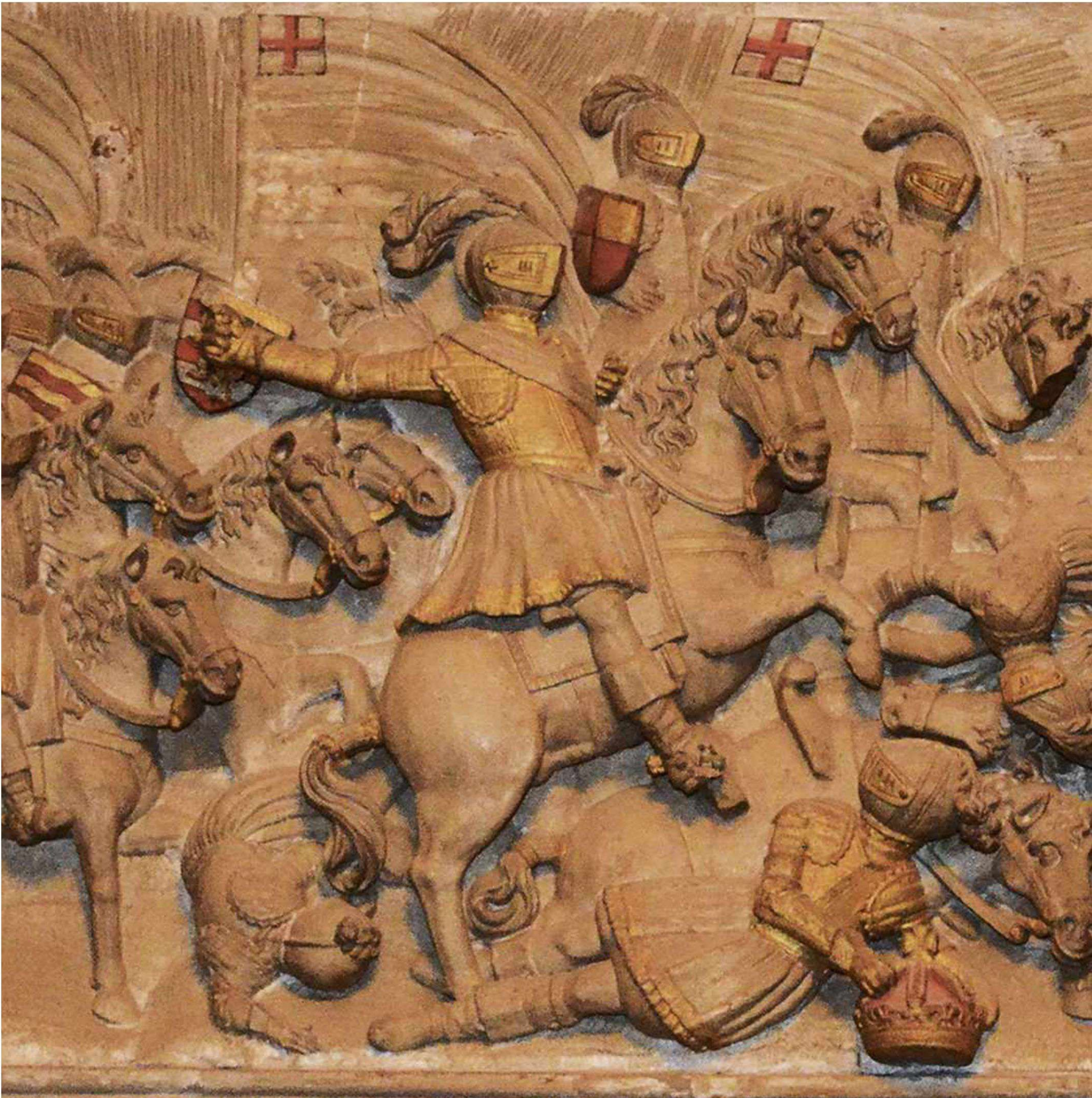
John de Vere,  
15th Earl of Oxford

**1487**

At the **Battle of Stoke Field** some of Richard’s supporters, who had survived the Battle of Bosworth, challenge Henry Tudor and are **defeated by the Earl of Oxford, John de Vere**, the commander of Henry’s vanguard at Bosworth. The Wars of the Roses come to an end.



# THE DAWN OF THE TUDORS





From childhood imprisonment in Brittany to his unlikely victory over Richard III in a Leicestershire field, Henry Tudor's passage to the throne was lengthy and labyrinthine. **Chris Skidmore** charts the origins of the Tudor dynasty



The battle of Bosworth depicted in a 16th-century frieze. In the centre, Henry VII rides over a stricken Richard III, who is clutching his crown

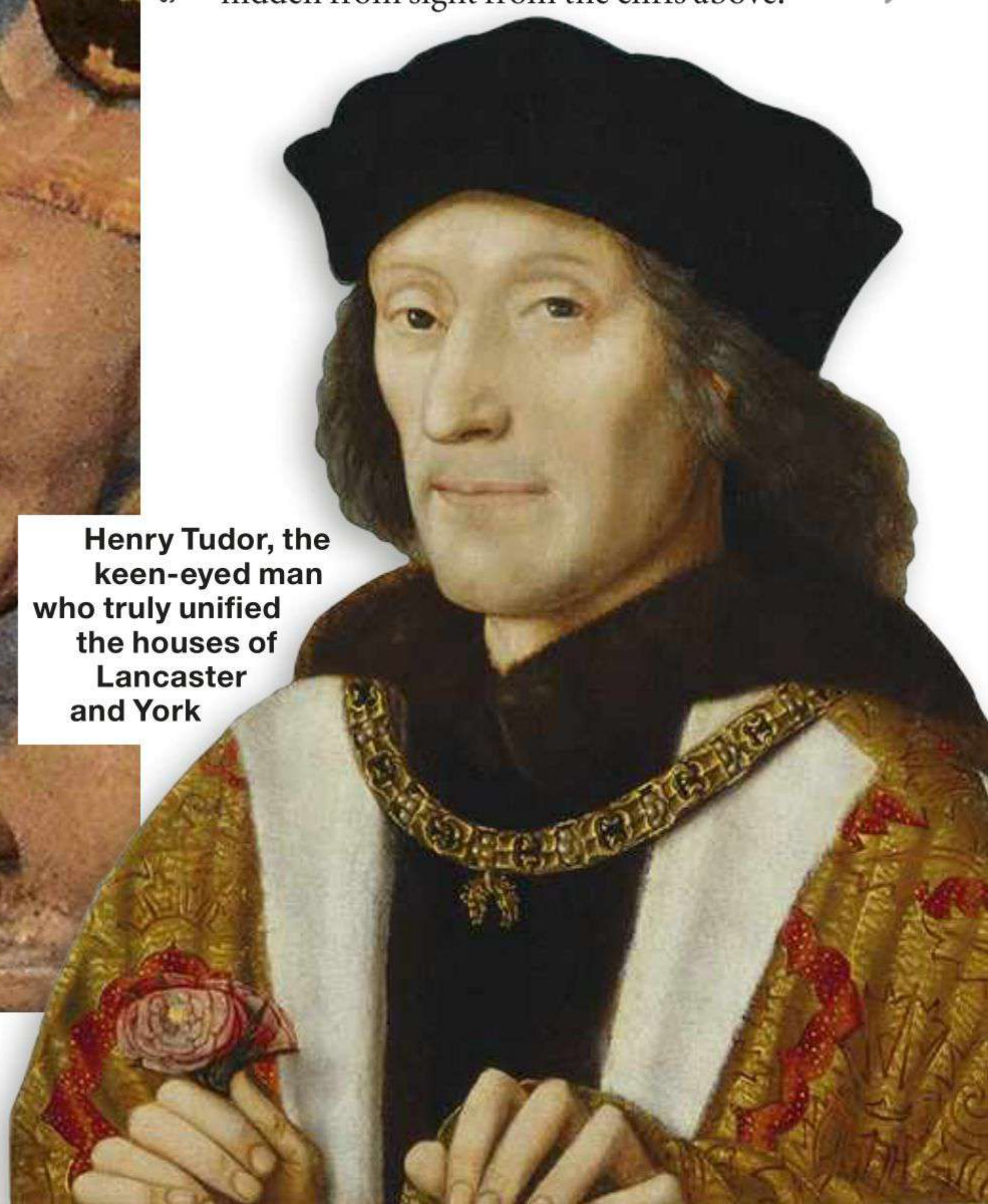
Wales, 7 August 1485. As the sun lowered beneath the horizon across the Milford estuary, a flotilla of ships

drifted across the mouth of the Haven. It had been a week since the fleet had sailed from the shelter of the Seine at Honfleur, but the ships had made fast progress in the balmy August weather. On board, soldiers waited. They included a rabble of 2,000 Breton and French soldiers (many only recently released from prison and, according to the chronicler Commynes, "the worst sort... raised out of the refuse of the people"). There were also 1,000 Scottish troops and 400 Englishmen who had enjoyed their last sight of Britain two years previously, when they had fled in fear of their lives.

The ships entered the mouth of the estuary where, looking left, dark red sandstone cliffs, scores of metres high and impossible to scale, gave way to a small cove hidden from sight from the cliffs above. >

STOWE HOUSE/NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Henry Tudor, the keen-eyed man who truly unified the houses of Lancaster and York





The tide had peaked an hour earlier, enabling the ships to creep silently to the edge of the narrow shoreline, allowing the troops to disembark. Their arrival stirred no one. The waters soon clouded with sand as the men began to heave cannon, guns and ordnance from the boats, leading horses from the ships and onto land.

From one of the boats stepped a 28-year-old man. Pale and slender, above average height with shoulder-length brown hair, he had a long face with a red wart just above his chin. Yet his most noticeable feature to those who met him was his small blue eyes, which gave out the impression of energy and liveliness whenever he spoke.

Stepping from his boat, the man took a few steps forward on land upon which he had last set foot 14 years before. Kneeling down in the sand, he took his finger and drew a sign of the cross, which he then kissed. Then, holding up his hands to the skies, he uttered words from the first line from the 43rd Psalm: "Judge and revenge my cause O Lord," which the soldiers now began to sing. As the words of the psalm echoed around Mill Bay in the darkening evening, one line in particular must have stood out above all others: "O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man."

### Moment of reckoning

The journey across Wales to win a kingdom had only just begun. Henry Tudor's arrival to claim the crown of England was the end of a journey that had lasted his whole life. The moment of reckoning had arrived.

The remarkable rise to prominence of the Tudors is shrouded in fable. Long before Henry Tudor's landing in 1485, the family had nearly driven itself into annihilation due to their support of Owain Glyndŵr's disastrous rebellion in 1400. It would take a scandalous affair to trigger a remarkable turnaround in the Tudors' fortunes.

Owen Tudor was a household servant in Henry V's court. After the king's premature death, his widowed queen, Katherine of

"Through the brutal consequences of war, 14-year-old Henry Tudor was one of the **few remaining members of the royal family**"

Valois, took a shine to the handsome Welsh page, supposedly after he had drunkenly fallen into her lap dancing at a ball. Their illicit union, later formalised by a secret marriage, produced several children, including Edmund and Jasper Tudor. Henry VI recognised both as his half-brothers, creating them the earls of Richmond and Pembroke.

Edmund had ambitions for self-enrichment, his means being marriage to the wealthiest heiress in the land. Margaret Beaufort was the sole inheritor of the Beaufort family fortune, and had her own claim to the throne. She was just a child but, when it came to marriage, land took precedence over love for Edmund. Aged just 12, Margaret found herself pregnant. Edmund, however, would not live to see the birth of his heir.

Although Edmund Tudor is reported to have died of the plague, this obscures the fact that he had been recently arrested by adherents of the king's rival, Richard, Duke of York; his treatment in prison, many suspected, hastened his death. Already divisions between the houses of Lancaster and York had been exposed to full glare at the first battle of St Albans in 1455, where Jasper Tudor himself witnessed the Lancastrian king Henry VI being injured. Civil war would soon erupt as the Duke of York claimed the throne for himself.

With Edmund's death, Jasper Tudor would assume the mantle of the head of the family. He swiftly arranged for Margaret to marry Henry Stafford, second son of the wealthy Duke of Buckingham. But any newfound stability was to be short-lived. Despite an attempt at reconciliation, factionalism between the Lancastrian court and



AKG-IMAGES/ TOPFOTO/BRIDGEMAN

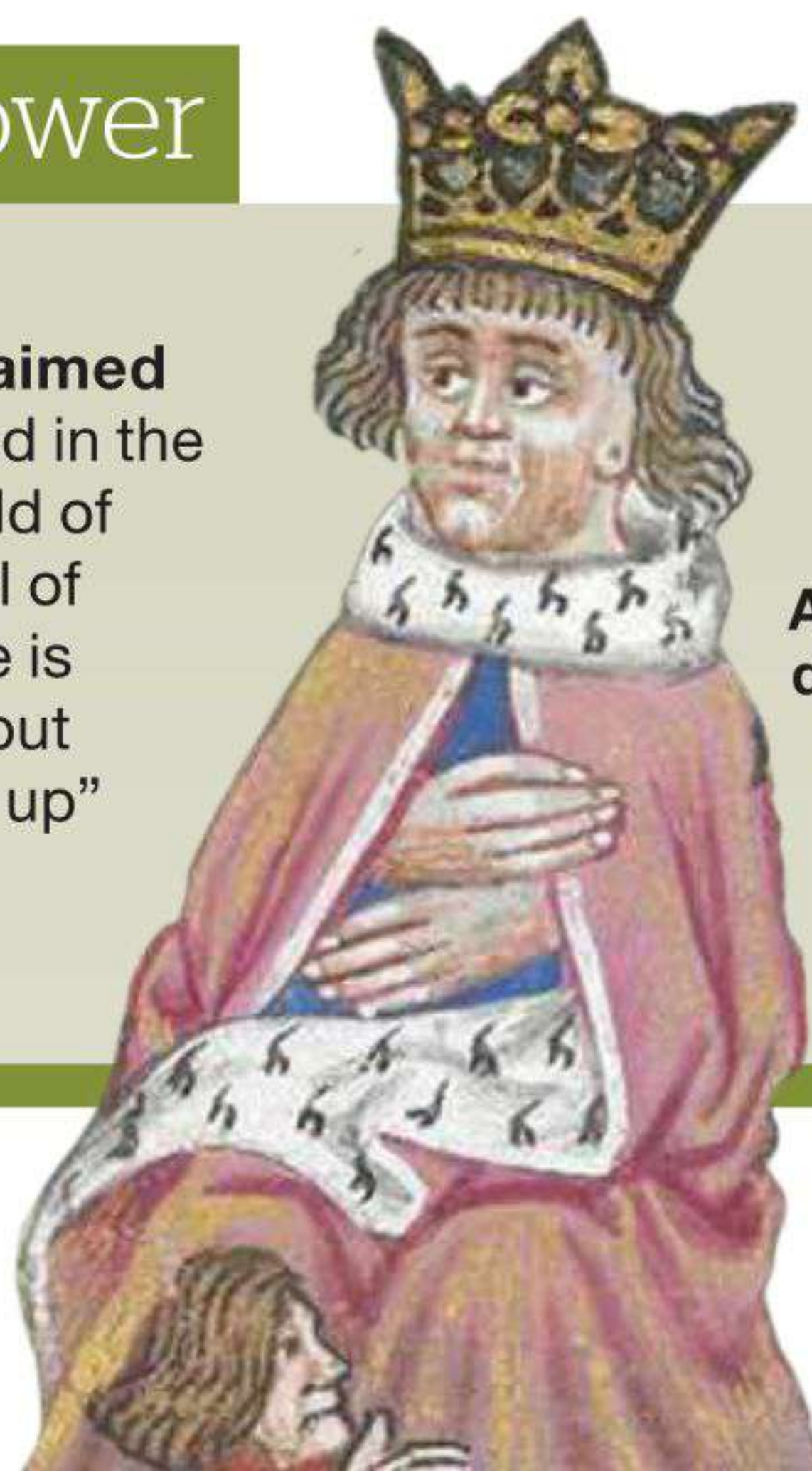
### Timeline: Henry's rise to power

#### January 1457

After a difficult labour at Pembroke Castle that may have permanently damaged her 13-year-old body, **Margaret Beaufort gives birth to Henry Tudor, her only son**

#### March 1461

**Edward IV is proclaimed king.** Henry is placed in the care of the household of William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, where he is "kept as a prisoner but honourably brought up" at Raglan Castle



**Edward IV depicted on the throne.** After Edward's death, Richard of Gloucester snatched the crown for himself

#### 1471

After the Lancastrian forces are routed at the battle of Tewkesbury, **Jasper Tudor flees to Pembroke Castle. Seizing his nephew, he escaped by sea** from Tenby, aiming for the French coast. Instead, a storm blows them off course and they land at Le Conquet, Brittany



A contemporary illustration depicts the blue-robed Henry VII performing a variety of tasks at the Tower of London following his accession to the throne



York's supporters erupted into open warfare in the late 1450s and into 1460, when the Yorkists secured a crushing victory at Northampton, capturing Henry VI.

York was declared Henry's successor, only for a dramatic reversal in fortune when the duke was executed after the battle of Wakefield in December 1460. York's son and heir, Edward, Earl of March, wreaked his revenge two months later when, at the battle of Mortimer's Cross in early 1461, he routed the Lancastrian forces, killing 3,000 Welshmen. One of the victims was an elderly Owen Tudor, who was executed at the market cross in Hereford, his last words reportedly being "That head shall lie on the stock that was wont to lie on Queen Katherine's lap." Jasper was forced to flee, promising to avenge his father's death "with the might of the Lord."

Vengeance would be a long time coming. Edward's crushing victory at the battle of Towton a month later heralded a decade of Yorkist rule, as he acceded to the throne as Edward IV. In exile, first in Wales and later France, Jasper was stripped of his earldom, while his young nephew Henry was placed in the charge of the new Earl of Pembroke, William Herbert, where he was brought up at Raglan Castle under the care of Herbert's wife, Anne.

Henry's mother, Margaret, paid occasional visits to her son. However, mother and son weren't reunited until 1470, when the defection of Warwick 'the Kingmaker' forced Edward IV from power and returned Henry VI to the throne. Margaret could now pay for a bow and sheaves of arrows to keep Henry amused. She even arranged for an audience with Henry VI, who is reported to have foretold that Henry Tudor would one day inherit the kingdom.

Jasper was restored to his earldom and given extensive powers under the restored Lancastrian regime, but it was not to last. In March 1471, Edward IV launched a remarkable comeback, returning from exile in Holland. Within the space of a month, two critical battles at Barnet and

Tewkesbury resulted in the deaths of Warwick, Margaret Beaufort's husband Stafford and Henry VI's son Prince Edward, shortly followed by Henry VI's own suspicious end in the Tower. The Lancastrian dynasty had run into the sand. Through the brutal consequences of war, Henry Tudor was rapidly becoming one of the last remaining members of the royal family, though his claim to the throne was hardly taken seriously at the time.

### Blown off course

After the crushing defeat of the Lancastrian forces at Tewkesbury, Jasper had no choice but to flee into exile again. This time, sailing from Tenby in a small boat bound for French shores where he hoped to enlist the support of Louis XI, he took with him his 14-year-old nephew Henry. Yet when a storm blew them off course, they found themselves washed up on the shores of Le Conquet in neighbouring Brittany. At the time, Brittany was an independent duchy separate from France, and relations between the two were openly hostile – understandable, given French ambitions to unite the two countries.

The Breton ruler, Duke Francis II recognised the value of the Tudors as diplomatic pawns, and welcomed Jasper and Henry to his court. Francis understood that these new arrivals could be used to bargain with Edward IV, who was desperate to have both returned to England. He kept both under close supervision, separating uncle and nephew, with Henry sent to the isolated Tour d'Elven, where he was imprisoned on the sixth floor of its keep. Henry's exile in Brittany over the next 14 years would be spent as a prisoner, albeit with household expenses totalling £2,000 along with £620 for his own personal use.

Edward IV made repeated but failed attempts to entice Francis to hand over the Tudors. In 1476, he persuaded the duke that he intended for Henry to marry his daughter Elizabeth, and requested his return. Francis fell for the ruse, and Henry

### November 1476

Having spent years imprisoned at Breton castles such as Sauscinio and the Tour d'Elven, **Henry is almost captured by English delegates** who convince Duke Francis II that Edward IV intends his rehabilitation. Taken to St-Malo to be shipped back to England, Henry feigns illness and escapes into sanctuary

### October 1483

After the Duke of Buckingham rebels against Richard III, **Henry attempts an invasion, sailing to Plymouth harbour.** Richard's men, however, are patrolling the shoreline in force and, after the sudden collapse of the rebellion, Henry decides to turn back to Brittany

### Christmas Day, 1483

**Henry's cause is bolstered by hundreds of English rebels who flee the country to join him in exile.** They include prominent Yorkists such as the Marquis of Dorset. In order to fully win over their support, Lancastrian Henry pledges to marry Elizabeth of York (pictured left), Edward IV's daughter, thereby uniting the houses of Lancaster and York





was taken to St-Malo, ready to be boarded onto a ship to transport him back to England. But Henry feigned illness and, in the ensuing delay, managed to escape into sanctuary in the town.

Edward IV's death in April 1483 marked a turning point in Henry's fortunes. Following the mysterious disappearance of Edward V and his brother that summer, Richard of Gloucester seized the crown, and a massive rebellion led by the Duke of Buckingham broke out in October 1483. Spurred on by his mother, who appears to have been strongly involved with the organisation of the rebellion, Henry decided to sail to the English coast with a fleet of Breton ships in the hope of invading. But the rebellion collapsed and, with Buckingham's execution, Henry had no option but to return to Brittany.

### Silver linings

Henry's aborted attempt to claim the crown may have ended in disaster, but its consequences were to prove highly advantageous. Hundreds of exiles fleeing from England soon arrived at Henry's 'court', many of whom were former household men of Edward IV, distraught at Richard's usurpation. They had now switched sides, backing the Lancastrian Henry Tudor. Henry also pledged an oath on Christmas Day 1483 to marry Elizabeth of York, Edward IV's eldest daughter, thereby uniting the houses of Lancaster and York.

But Henry's time in Brittany was soon to be cut short. When Richard offered to provide a force of several thousand archers to aid Brittany in their conflict with France, in return Henry and Jasper were to be arrested. Henry was tipped off about the plan with just hours to spare and managed to flee to France where he was received by the French court of Charles VIII. As a pawn in the diplomatic chessboard played out between France, Brittany and England, Henry's arrival was a gift for the French



The engraving for Henry VII's seal depicts the Tudor monarch riding into battle

**“Hundreds of exiles fled from England and arrived in Brittany, having switched sides to back Lancastrian Henry Tudor”**

regime, who agreed to equip Henry with money, ships and mercenaries “of the worst sort” to launch an attack on Richard. At the last moment, though, they held back on their promises of funding, forcing Henry to borrow from brokers in Paris. He set sail with his army on 1 August 1485.

Richard III was reportedly “overjoyed” at news of Henry's landing. Yet, as Henry's march along the coastline of Wales went unhindered, Richard grew nervous, becoming suspicious of the involvement of Henry's stepfather, Thomas Stanley (who had become Margaret Beaufort's third husband), and his brother Sir William Stanley in the lack of resistance to

Henry's growing band of men as he travelled through north Wales and to the gates of Shrewsbury. The key defections of Welsh landowner Sir Rhys ap Thomas and Sir Gilbert Talbot provided Henry with the momentum he needed to push forward towards London. Henry made plans to march down Watling Street, the current-day A5.

Richard had spent the summer at Nottingham, waiting to see where Henry might land. Now he hurried down to Leicester where he amassed a force of some 15,000 men – at the time, one of the largest armies ever assembled on one side. On 21 August, both armies drew close, camping for the night at spots overlooking the marshy terrain known as ‘Redemore’ near the villages of Dadlington, Stoke Golding and Upton.

Henry could not be sure of the Stanleys' support at Bosworth. Suspecting treachery, Richard had kept Thomas Stanley's son George, Lord Strange, imprisoned as a hostage to ensure his father's good behaviour. Henry held a clandestine meeting with both brothers on the night of 21 August, and when morning came, Stanley refused to march his forces into line, preferring to remain upon the brow of the surrounding hills, between the opposing armies.

Richard, meanwhile, had slept badly, reputedly haunted by nightmares. He woke to find that his camp was unprepared to hear mass or eat breakfast. As the sides lined up for battle in the early hours of 22 August, it was clear that Richard's army was vastly superior, with his “countless multitude” of men. In contrast, Henry had at best 5,000 men, of which his French mercenaries had to be kept apart from his native soldiers, for fear of them falling out.

Henry's vanguard was led by John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the Lancastrian commander who had managed to escape imprisonment to join Henry in France. Oxford's expertise oversaw the rout of

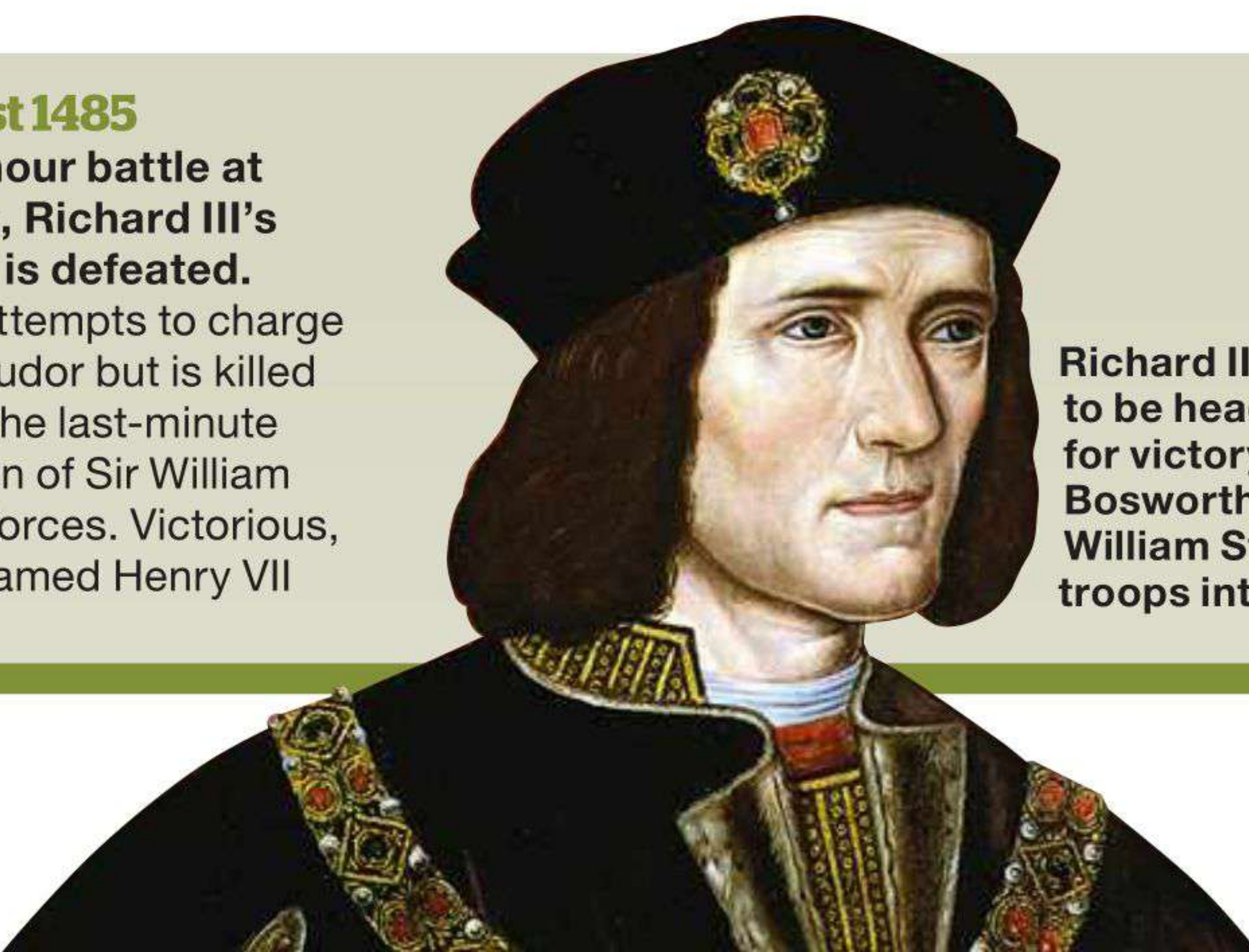
MARY EVANS/ALAMY

**7 August 1485**  
Henry and his army of more than 3,000 men land at Mill Bay in west Wales, ready to launch their campaign to capture the throne

**22 August 1485**  
In a two-hour battle at Bosworth, Richard III's vanguard is defeated. The king attempts to charge at Henry Tudor but is killed thanks to the last-minute intervention of Sir William Stanley's forces. Victorious, Henry is named Henry VII

**30 October 1485**  
Henry is formally crowned. His mother, Margaret Beaufort, is observed to have “wept marvelously” during the coronation

Richard III looked to be heading for victory at Bosworth before William Stanley's troops intervened





# Three notable figures in Henry VII's life

## Jasper Tudor

It was through the care and devotion of Jasper – loyal uncle of Henry Tudor – that the Tudor dynasty was born. Second son of Owen Tudor, Jasper found himself embroiled in the civil wars as he defended his half-brother Henry VI. When Henry lost the throne, Jasper went into exile, taking his nephew with him. He remained a constant presence in Henry Tudor's life, his loyalty rewarded after Bosworth with the dukedom of Bedford.



Jasper Tudor, Henry VII's "loyal uncle"

## John de Vere, Earl of Oxford

A stalwart Lancastrian whose father and brother had been executed by the Yorkists, the Earl of Oxford came to prominence at the battle of Barnet in 1471. On the cusp of victory at that clash, his troops became confused in the mist and began attacking their own side, and were defeated by Edward IV. Oxford fled, reappearing three years later, when he seized St Michael's Mount. In 1484, he joined Henry in exile in France. Making the journey to Bosworth, Oxford was placed in command of Henry's vanguard. His military knowledge – in particular, manoeuvring his troops to ensure that the sun and wind were against Richard's forces – may have proved critical in winning the battle.



The battle of Barnet, where the Earl of Oxford snatched defeat from the jaws of victory

## Margaret Beaufort

Henry Tudor's "dearest and most entirely beloved mother", Margaret was barely a teenager when she gave birth to her only son. Suspected to be one of the driving forces behind Buckingham's rebellion, she encouraged her son to invade, sending money and support. After Henry's assumption of power, Margaret became one of the most important figures at court. She died two months after her son.



Henry's "most entirely beloved mother", Margaret Beaufort

Richard's vanguard and the death of its commander, the elderly Duke of Norfolk. By now, Richard had begun to realise that many on his own side, particularly those led by the Earl of Northumberland in his rearguard, were standing still, refusing to fight. He was offered the chance to flee, yet refused, preferring to fight to the death.

Spotting Henry at the back of the battlefield, surrounded only by a small band of soldiers, Richard charged on horseback towards its ranks. After

unhorsing Sir John Cheney – at 6 feet 8 inches, one of the tallest soldiers of the day – Richard's men managed to kill Henry's standard-bearer, Sir William Brandon, while Richard's own standard-bearer, Sir Percival Thirlwall, had both his legs hacked away beneath him.

With Henry fearing imminent death, the sudden charge of Sir William Stanley's 3,000 men drove Richard into a nearby marsh, where he was killed, the blows of the

halberds of Henry's Welsh troops raining down on him.

Thanks to the rediscovery of Richard's remains under a Leicester car park, we now know that the king suffered massive trauma to the head, including one wound that cut clean through the skull and into his brain. With the king dead, and after two bloody hours of fighting, the battle was over. On the nearby 'Crown Hill', Henry was proclaimed king by Thomas Stanley.

Two months later, he was officially crowned Henry VII at Westminster Abbey. The following January, he married Elizabeth of York, thereby fulfilling his promise to unite the houses of Lancaster and York. After decades of uncertainty and exile, the Tudor dynasty was finally born. **H**

**Chris Skidmore** is an author, historian, MP for Kingswood and vice-chairman of the All-Party Group on Archives and History

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

► **Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors** by Chris Skidmore (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2014)

**Henry's coat of arms, together with a poem written on the occasion of his first son's birth in 1486**

#### 21 April 1509

**Henry VII dies.** He asks for the executor of his will to be "his dearest and most entirely beloved mother". Two months later, Margaret Beaufort also dies





# BOSWORTH UNCOVERED

Bosworth is among the most famous lost battlefields in the world – or it was. Centuries of speculation, uncertainty and debate over the exact spot where Henry Tudor clashed with Richard III on 22 August 1485 were finally laid to rest in March 2009 when a team of archaeologists discovered the true site of the Wars of the Roses battle – in a location never before suggested. On the following pages **Glenn Foard**, the man who directed the Battlefields Trust project, reveals the key elements of the game-changing discovery

## HAVE WE DISCOVERED WHERE RICHARD DIED?

PAGE 75

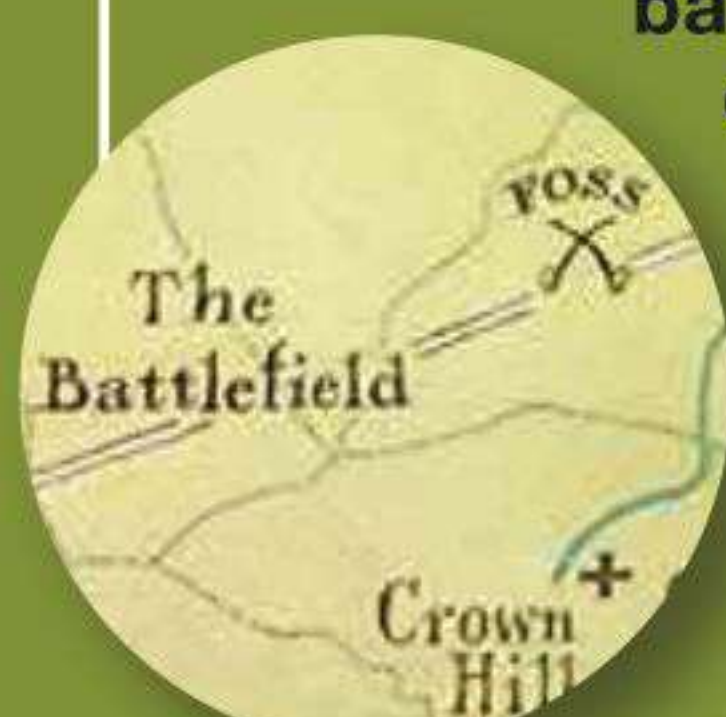
Discover why the artefacts unearthed at the site could transform our understanding of the battle that signalled the end of a dynasty



## THE RACE TO FIND THE BATTLEFIELD

PAGE 77

Glenn Foard describes his team's painstaking efforts to find the battle site – and explains why one crucial discovery turned the survey into a race against time



## DID GUNPOWDER WIN THE DAY?

PAGE 80

Find out why the discovery of a lead round shot at Bosworth may give historians a new insight into how guns came to dominate the battlefields of Europe





# Have we discovered where Richard died?

Glenn Foard introduces three of the key artefacts found at the Bosworth battle site, and explains why they could transform our understanding of the events of that fateful day in August 1485

To pinpoint the exact site of one of the most significant clashes in British history was undoubtedly a hugely satisfying achievement. Yet those who hoped that the Battlefield Trust's three-year search for Bosworth's battlefield would lead its team of archaeologists to a vast treasure trove of battle-related finds were to be disappointed. Unlike Towton (another Wars of the Roses clash and the only other intensively surveyed medieval battlefield), Bosworth steadfastly refused to give up large numbers of artefacts - and those that we have discovered each took dozens of hours to find.

That's not to say that the objects found haven't proved fascinating and significant. On the contrary - and as the following examples prove - they have the potential to answer questions about the battle that have puzzled historians for centuries.



An engraving of Richard III, who met his end at the battle of Bosworth, published in 1611

## 1 The vital clue to the spot where the king fell

A silver-gilt livery badge depicting a boar

This badge, depicting a boar, may provide a clue to the exact spot where Richard III died. It was recovered from the edge of a former marsh called Fen Hole, within 400 metres of where the Roman road, Fen Lane, forded a stream (see map on p78).

Facing defeat towards the end of the battle, Richard made one final, desperate charge at the head of a small body of knights,

in an attempt to kill Henry Tudor. He was almost successful - but at the last moment he was driven back by Sir William Stanley's men and was then cut down as his horse became stuck in a mire at a place recorded as 'Sandeford'.

A boar was the king's personal device, and the badge is similar to one in the British Museum identified to Richard. As it is silver gilt, it was almost certainly worn by a knight of Richard's retinue. Such a knight surely rode in Richard's last charge - and perhaps fell close to where the king died.







## 2 Evidence of Burgundian troops fighting for Richard?

A silver coin of Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1467-77)

This double patard of Charles the Bold – found near the Fen Lane ford, in the heart of the battlefield (see map 2 on page 78) – was almost certainly lost during the action. Because Burgundian coins were legal tender in England, it does not prove that soldiers from the Duchy of Burgundy (eastern France) fought in the battle, but such

coins are relatively rare. We recovered two others in the survey – both from Ambion Hill, which may have been the site of Richard's camp the night before the action. The Burgundians were in alliance with the Yorkist kings and provided military support to previous campaigns. It seems that this support may have extended to Bosworth.

## 3 Vestiges of a duke's last stand?

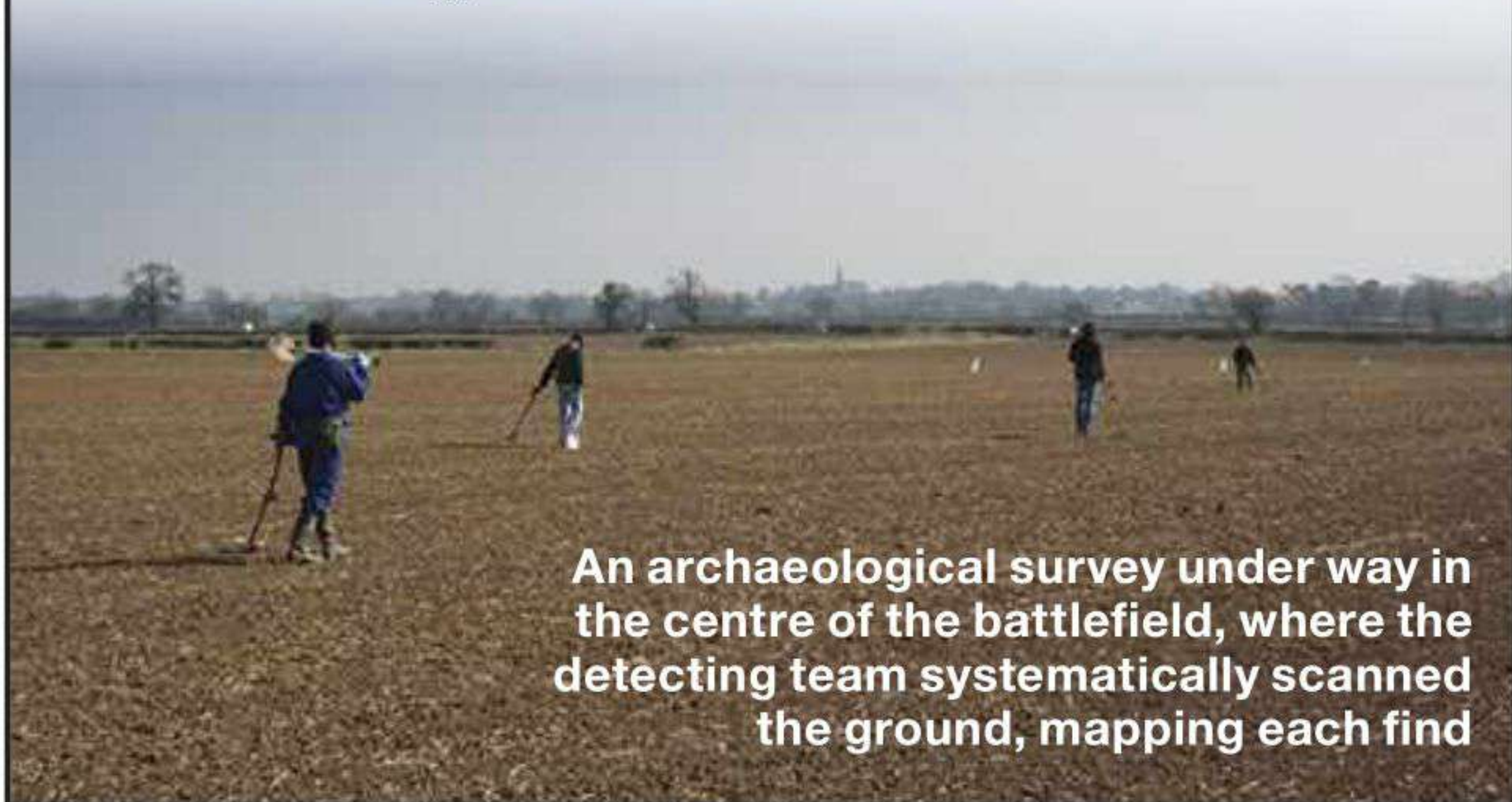
A badge lost close to where the Duke of Norfolk was killed

This silver-gilt badge of a bird will have been worn by a knight in the retinue of one of the nobility who fought in the battle.

The badge was found close to the site of Dadlington windmill (see map 2 on page 78), first identified by the Bosworth historian Peter Foss in the 1980s.

According to an early ballad, the Duke of Norfolk, commander of the vanguard of Richard's army, was killed

beside a windmill during the rout at the end of the battle. It may be, then, that the original owner of this badge and his lord were engaged in that last stand beside the windmill where the Duke of Norfolk was slain.



An archaeological survey under way in the centre of the battlefield, where the detecting team systematically scanned the ground, mapping each find

2009 PETE RILEY-SPOOKY-NOOK CREATIVE/GLEN FOARD

# Bosworth and its legacy

### What happened at this battle?

The clash on 22 August 1485 between the Yorkist king Richard III and Henry Tudor, the Lancastrian pretender to the throne, was the decisive battle that brought to an end the conflicts we now know as the Wars of the Roses (1453-1485). Henry did, though, have to defend his crown two years later at the battle of Stoke Field in 1487.

### Why was the location of the battle contentious?

The true site of the battle was common knowledge until the mid-17th century, before being lost to history. Since William Hutton's 1788 *Battle of Bosworth Field*, the battle was believed to have been fought on Ambion Hill, two miles south of Market Bosworth. Then, in 1985, Colin Richmond suggested that this site was not compatible with the original evidence for the battle, proposing an alternative a mile to the south in Dadlington, a theory developed by Peter Foss. This led to a sometimes vociferous dispute between historians about the true site, compounded in 2002 when Michael Jones suggested another location, nearly five miles away near Atherstone.

### Where did this latest survey place the battle?

The archaeological study – which was undertaken by the Battlefields Trust with £150,000 funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Leicestershire County Council – proved that the armies actually clashed nearly two miles south-west of Ambion Hill, and more than half a mile west of the site suggested by Foss. However, it seems the rout did extend into the latter area (see maps on page 78).

### What does the survey mean for the Bosworth Heritage Centre?

Leicestershire County Council initially commissioned the survey to ensure the accuracy of the story presented in their revamped visitor centre on Ambion Hill.

Much has since been made of the fact that the centre is not located at the site of the battle, but interpretation

centres should not be placed at the heart of battlefields – otherwise they may damage the very sites they are intended to explain. The one at Culloden was moved in 2007 for this very reason.

Redeveloped facilities at Bosworth give the updated story and provide a gateway to the battlefield, with a trail and view from the Heritage Centre and interpretation on the battlefield itself.

### What does the survey mean for England's battlefields in general?

In 1995, English Heritage established a Battlefields Register, the first of its kind in Europe. Though this assists local authorities in using planning law to protect sites from development, it provides no statutory protection. As a result, the very type of evidence that allowed the Bosworth battlefield to be located and understood – evidence that simply must be recovered and studied archaeologically if it is to yield its story – continues to be destroyed on battlefields across the country by treasure hunters, often quite innocently. This is the case at sites such as Towton and Marston Moor, where the archaeology has been decimated. Bosworth escaped damage only because, till this survey, its location remained unknown.

### What should be done?

In 2003, the government accepted the need to control metal detecting on nationally important battlefields, yet still nothing has been done. In the meantime, English Heritage has worked with Natural England, Leicestershire County Council and landowners at Bosworth to safeguard the site, while elsewhere English Heritage has funded work by the Battlefields Trust to promote conservation on other battlefields.

Statutory protection is urgently needed. Battlefields such as Naseby and Flodden are of the highest importance with fascinating stories to tell. They are just as deserving of protection as the more traditional archaeological sites such as Stonehenge and Maiden Castle.



# The race to find the battlefield

The discovery of the Bosworth battlefield was one of the historical highlights of 2009 – yet it very nearly never happened. Here, Glenn Foard describes how his team's painstaking efforts to pinpoint the site turned into a race against time



It was the tiniest of objects and, to the untrained eye, barely worth a second glance. But when a single lead ball – a mere 30mm in diameter – was discovered in a Leicestershire field at the beginning of March 2009, it was to transform a faltering project to pinpoint the site of one of Britain's most significant battles into a race against the clock.

The discovery of this diminutive artefact was the turning point in the Battlefield Trust's three-year project to establish, once and for all, the true site of the battle of Bosworth. Before that find we were running out of time, and fast – with just one week of fieldwork still available to us. After it, we knew we had found our prize – and it was in the very last area at the edge of the survey.

Our suspicions were confirmed the following day when, in a neighbouring field, we found a 60mm lead ball that could only be round shot fired by artillery during the battle. This was enough to secure an extension to the project timetable – an extension that brought us eight more round shot in the following four weeks.

Three years earlier we had begun our search for the battlefield knowing that the battle of Bosworth was thus named simply because Bosworth was the nearest market town in the 15th century. We also knew that the earliest recorded battle name was 'Redemore', which suggests that the battle took place on a low, wet moor.

In the 1980s, local historian Peter Foss showed that this lay somewhere within or immediately adjacent to Dadlington township (see map 1, overleaf). We confirmed Foss's theory with other documentary references, proving that the battlefield was located in the general area shown by Saxton's atlas of 1575. This was

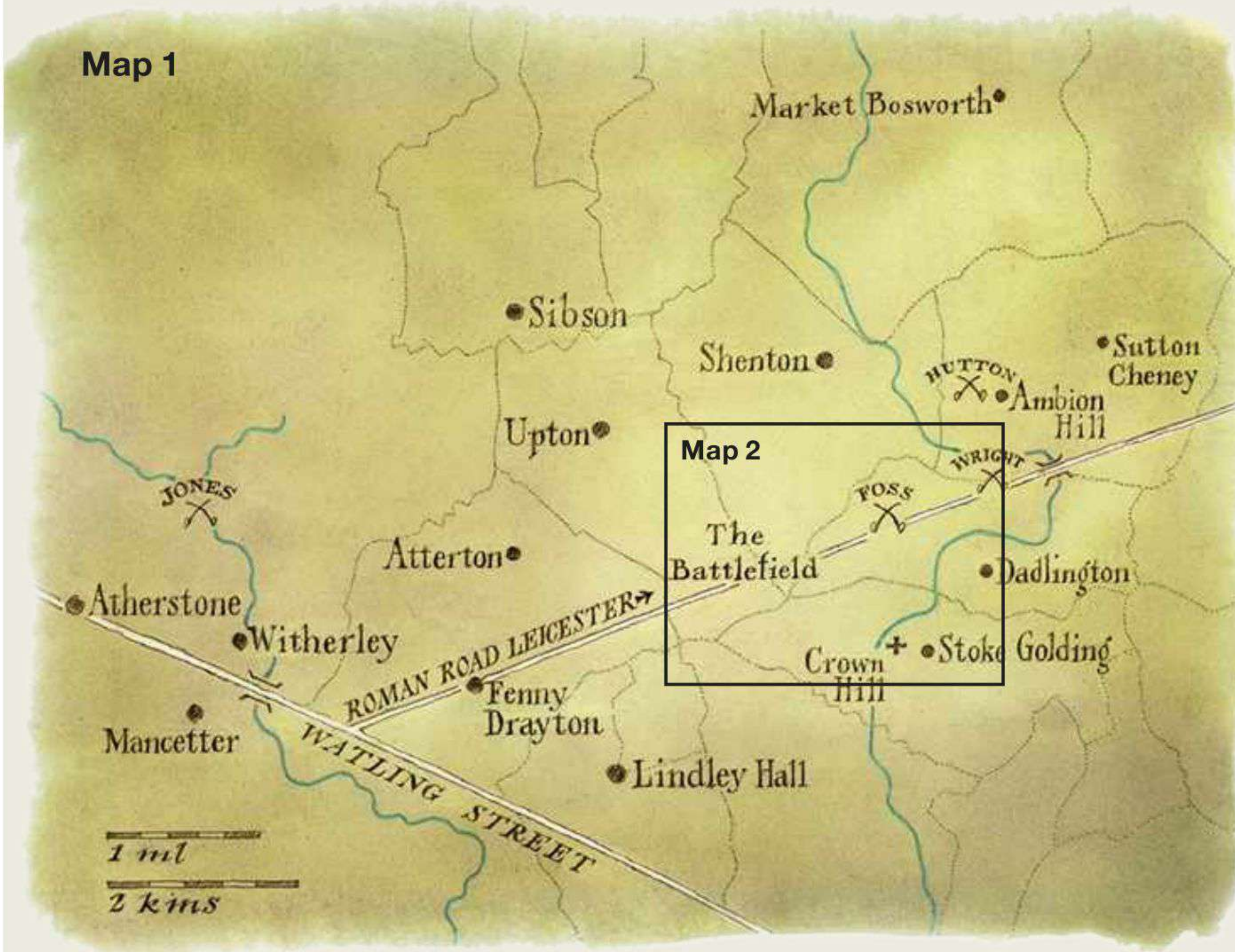
Rodney Burton carries out augering as part of a large-scale soil survey of the battlefield

"The accounts say that Richard died when his horse became stuck in a mire. So finding the marsh was absolutely crucial"

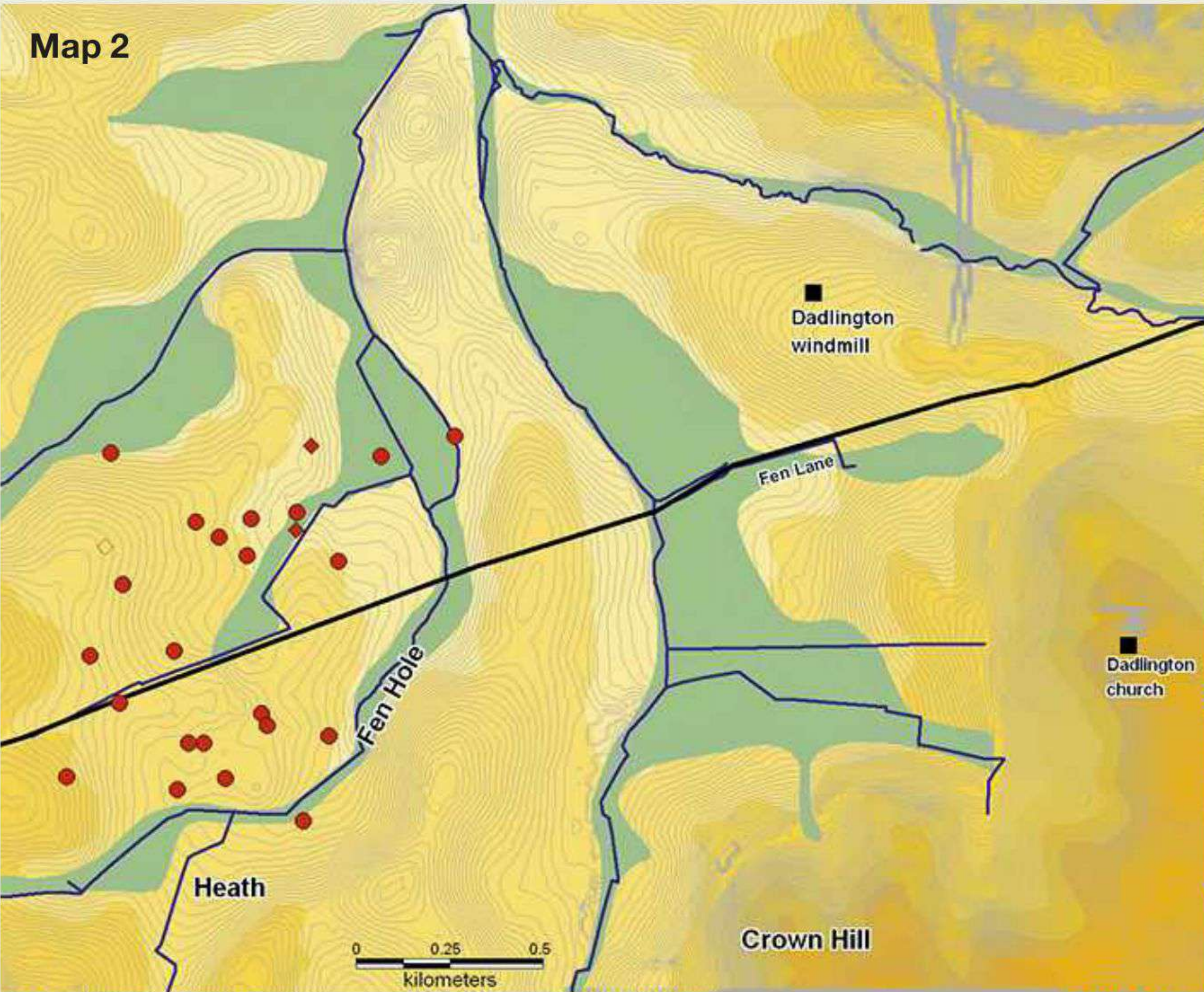


# Where the battle unfolded

The Battlefield Trust survey established that the fighting took place in a location never previously suggested, as these maps show



 Putative locations of the battle, as suggested by previous theories, labelled with the names of the historians who proposed these sites



The red circles on this map show where lead round shot has been discovered, while the red diamonds indicate hand cannon bullets. Richard III was probably killed immediately to the west of Fen Hole. The green areas indicate soils that developed in waterlogged conditions, a tiny part of which was marshland



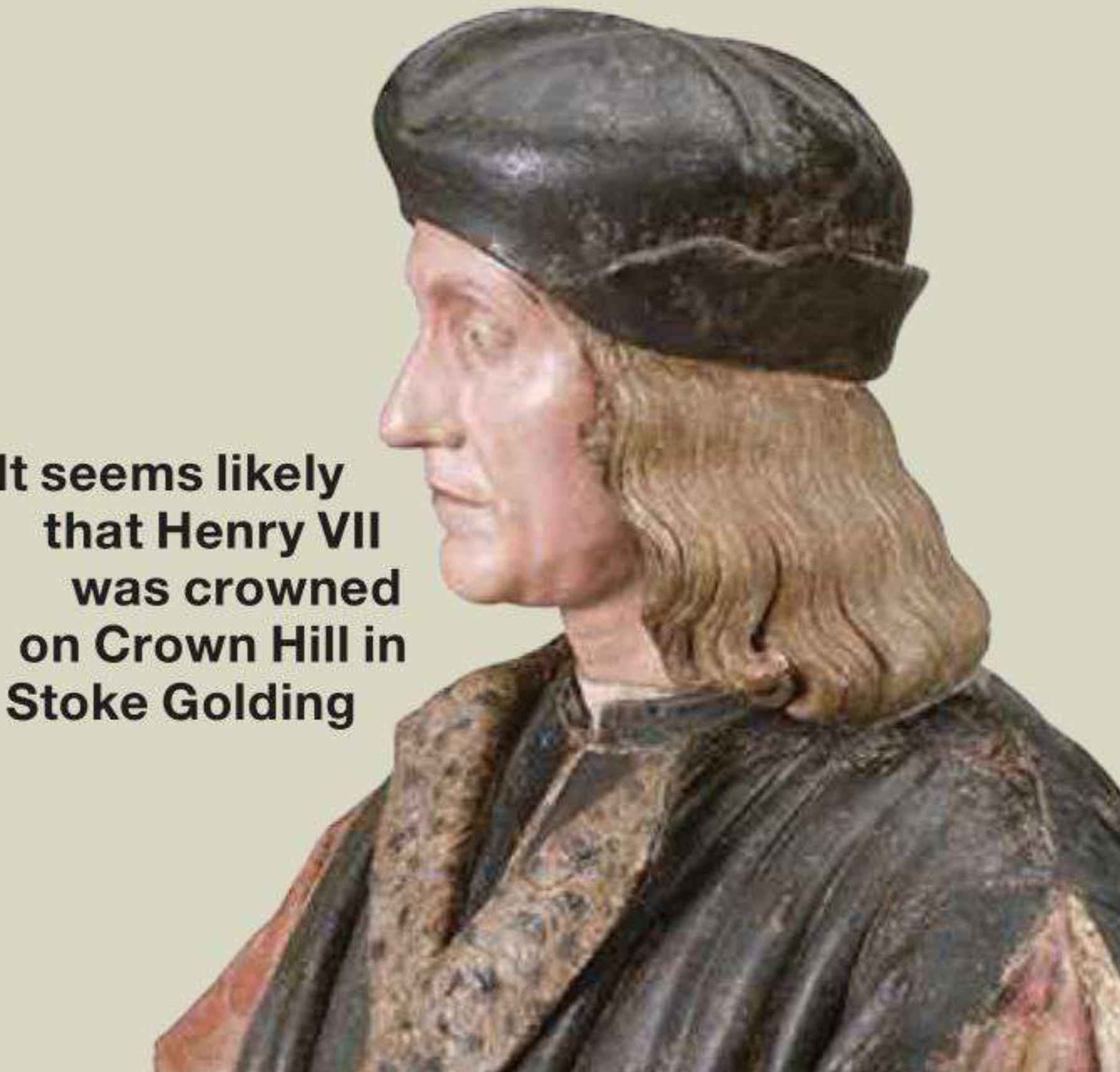
## The search for the hill where Henry was crowned

Our investigations suggest that the local tradition that it was on Crown Hill in Stoke Golding that Henry Tudor was crowned (see map 2) has its foundations in a genuine historical event.

Why? Well, the original accounts of the battle state that, once victory was secured, Henry's entourage repaired to the nearest hill, where they performed an impromptu coronation – and Crown Hill is, indeed, the closest large hill to the newly discovered battle site.

We know that Crown Hill wasn't always called Crown Hill (in fact, the name doesn't start appearing in records until 1605) because we have found the name it bore before the battle. Barrie Cox, our place-name specialist, has located a document that describes the medieval fields of Stoke Golding a few years before the battle. When we placed the names on our reconstructed map of the open field furlongs it showed that Crown Hill was then called 'Garbrode'. Surely the change of name reflects the momentous event that occurred there on 22 August 1485.

DAVID ATKINSON - HANDMADEMAPS.COM/GLENN FOARD/ALAMY



It seems likely that Henry VII was crowned on Crown Hill in Stoke Golding



all well and good, but none of the documents specify exactly where Redemore lay.

Peter Foss had noted that the battle had also been called 'Dadlington Field', while the chantry in memory of the dead lay in the chapel in the village of Dadlington. This implies that the main mass graves – which are typically located at the heart of the action or in the rout at the end of the battle – had been dug somewhere in the territory served by the Dadlington chapel.

Next we turned to the detailed topographical evidence in the original accounts of the battle. According to the historian Vergil's early 16th-century account of the clash, "Between the armies was a marsh which Henry purposely kept on his left so it would serve to protect his men. By the doing thereof also he left the sun upon his back".

This tactic allowed Henry to attack the right wing of Richard's army. The accounts also say that Richard died when his horse became stuck in a mire. This meant that finding the marsh was crucial to locating the action. So we constructed a map of the medieval open fields of the five townships, using archaeological and documentary evidence, because the marsh could not have lain where open field arable existed. Then we carried out a soils survey that allowed us to determine where the soils had developed in waterlogged conditions, and found that these matched the areas of meadow on our map of the medieval landscape.

### Finding the right marsh

Significantly, the survey proved there had never been a marsh on Ambion Hill (where 18th-century histories placed the battle). Instead it drew us more than a mile south-west towards an area where low ground lay beside several small streams – the general area where Foss had suggested the marsh lay and the battle was fought. Place-name study further narrowed the search, for fen-related names lay on either side of the streams close to where they were crossed by the former main road from Atherstone to Leicester, Roman in origin but now a minor road called the Fen Lane. The latter was the most likely line of approach to the battlefield by the two armies – Richard from Leicester the day before, and Henry from Atherstone on the morning of 22 August.

Next we instigated an intensive programme of soil augering (examining the character of the soil), followed by trenching, which identified a surviving peat deposit in Fen Meadow beside the eastern stream, buried beneath later alluvium. This seemed likely to be the marsh mentioned by Vergil – exactly where Foss had suggested the battle was fought. We seemed close to the answer.

## "Evidence of the arrow storm that preceded the hand-to-hand fighting may still await us"

Though the metal detecting survey had systematically examined a wider area, testing seven square kilometres for over a year, it had been focused on Foss's suggested site. During this time we discovered two small groups of unusual finds, one of which lay beside the site of Dadlington windmill, that seemed to relate to the battle.

Frustratingly, however, there was nothing to compare to the extensive scatter of finds that has been recovered from the Towton battlefield. Then came devastating news: though pollen analysis confirmed a former marsh, the carbon-14 dating of the peat deposit showed it had disappeared more than 500 years before the battle. The evidence was now weighted heavily against Foss's suggested site.

Following a clue provided by a local farmer we had identified a second but much smaller peat deposit that the initial augering had missed. It was more than half a mile away, beside the western stream (in an area of land once called Fen Hole). Though this initially seemed too small to have been tactically significant, scientific dating of surviving peat confirmed that Fen Hole had continued as a marsh into the medieval period, though upper layers probably contemporary with the battle had been destroyed by ploughing. Could this be the marsh to which Vergil referred?

It lay close to the heart of the distribution of fen names, while our work on the place-name evidence revealed the presence of heath close by. This recalled other names for the battle: Bosworth Heath or Brown Heath. However, the sample areas near Fen Hole that our detecting team had scoured in the earlier stages of the survey had produced nothing of interest – which was one reason we had initially dismissed the area.

In the beginning of March 2009, with time fast running out, we went back with our metal detectors to fill in the remaining gap left by the earlier sampling. It was then, within an hour of renewing our search, that we discovered the 30mm single lead ball. By the end of March we had found eight lead munitions – enough to get agreement for another season of fieldwork. In further fieldwork up to the end of 2010 we recovered 33 (possibly 34) lead projectiles from the battle, extending across more than a square kilometre.

It seems likely that we were seeing fire exchanged between armies on the north and south sides of Fen Lane. Associated with the round shot are other significant objects including a boar badge, a silver Burgundian coin and other medieval coins, a gilded sword fragment, a sword chape, a gold ring and a small number of buckles (see page 75 for more details about these finds). Remarkably, we can now see that over previous years we had surveyed to within a few metres of the scatter of round shot on three sides, yet found little to suggest we were on the battlefield.

### The arrow storm

With hindsight, the area beside Fen Hole may seem an obvious location. It matches a 17th-century antiquary's description of the battlefield as a flat plain. It is within sight of Crown Hill, beside the main concentration of fen names, and the Fen Lane runs through it. But it lies mostly in Upton township, in a location never before considered a potential site for the battle. Indeed, this may be why documentary research had failed to find an accurate location for Redemore or Sandeford – because no one had searched the archives for Upton, as it was so peripheral to all previous interpretations of the battle.

Because we spent so much time finding the battlefield, there was not time to complete some tasks needed to better understand it. For example, the archives for Upton have still to be adequately searched for the lost place-names, and we are not yet confident that we have fully defined the extent of the round shot scatter. All of the detecting has been for non-ferrous artefacts – there was no time for the far more time-consuming search for arrowheads, so evidence of the great arrow storm that preceded the hand-to-hand fighting may still await future survey. It is quite likely they have not survived, however, because iron is far more vulnerable to decay than other metals such as lead.

The success at Bosworth was achieved by a team that included not just archaeologists but also historians, soil and environmental scientists and a place-name expert. But the critical contribution was from the small group of metal detectorists who worked to a strict archaeological survey method. They were a vital cog in a project that fully vindicated the new methodology of battlefield archaeology, showing its potential to resolve long-standing problems in military history and advance understanding of the changing character of early warfare.





# Did gunpowder win the day?

More lead round shot has been found at the Bosworth site than in archaeological surveys at all European battlefields of the 15th and 16th centuries put together. So, asks Glenn Foard, did Richard III die with cannon fire ringing in his ears?

To say that Bosworth is proving a rich source of lead round shot would be something of an understatement. Two decades of metal detecting at Towton – another major battle of the Wars of the Roses, fought in 1461 – has produced just two small lead munitions. Between its discovery in March 2009 and December 2010, Bosworth yielded 34.

Such abundant evidence for the use of artillery at Bosworth is undoubtedly the greatest surprise of our investigations so far – and it opens a new archaeological chapter in the study of the use of early gunpowder

weapons. Working alongside historians, we may now finally be able to determine exactly when, where and how guns came to dominate the battlefields of Europe, unleashing a destructive force which ultimately enabled the creation of empires that spanned the globe.

The Wars of the Roses (1453–87) were fought within a crucial period in the development of firearms, during which mobile artillery was first applied in large numbers to the battlefield. By 1485, English commanders clearly realised the potential of artillery in open battle and were willing to commit substantial resources to deploy these weapons on the battlefield.

At Bosworth, the scale of the initial artillery salvo seems to have influenced the way the battle was fought, encouraging Henry's army to make a flank attack rather than face a frontal approach under heavy fire. However, these weapons were not yet a battle-winning force.

In the main action it was almost certainly through archery and then hand-to-hand fighting that the battle was won, just as at Agincourt or Crécy. Not until Pinkie (fought against Scottish forces near Edinburgh in 1547) would an English army win a decisive victory in a major battle chiefly through the use of firepower.

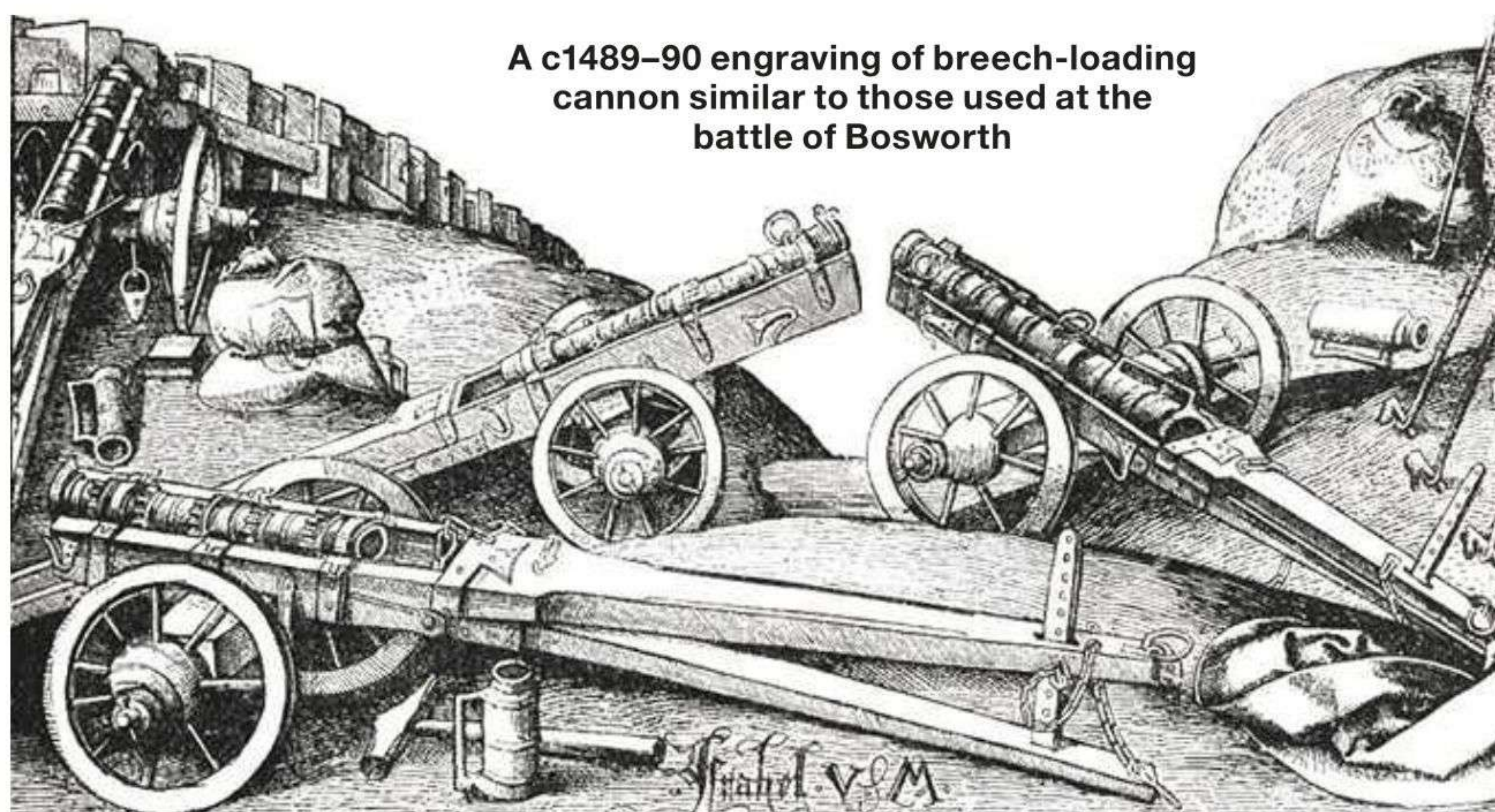




Some of the 15th-century lead munitions unearthed from the Bosworth battlefield since its discovery in March 2009

The lead round shot discovered at Bosworth ranges in diameter from 28mm up to 94mm – roughly equivalent to the largest mobile field artillery piece in common use in following centuries. In contrast only two or possibly three lead bullets likely to have been fired by ‘hand cannons’ – an early type of hand gun with a large bore – have so far been recovered from the site. But this is no surprise. With one or two notable exceptions – as St Albans in 1461 and Barnet in 1471 – where companies of foreign hand-gunners were deployed, handheld firearms were rarely employed by English armies until the mid-16th century. The effectiveness of the English longbow meant that the introduction of the early handgun was not a priority here, unlike in other parts of Europe.

The late 15th and early 16th century represented a period of great experimentation and innovation in the technology of gunpowder weapons – something confirmed by the diversity in type and size of munitions fired at Bosworth. All the types reported in the documentary sources for the first half of the 16th century are present. Some are of solid lead but most are composite – several have an iron cube at their core, others a large pebble, while yet more contain either



A c1489–90 engraving of breech-loading cannon similar to those used at the battle of Bosworth

## “The scale of the initial artillery salvo seems to have influenced the way the battle was fought”

small shards or larger chunks of flint. The reasons for this are now hotly debated. Was it simply to save lead? Was it an attempt to give the munitions special ballistic properties? Or was it perhaps to reduce their weight because the gun barrels, many of which were made of wrought iron rather than the cast iron or bronze typical of later centuries, simply could not take the pressures that a heavier ball would cause?

By the time of the Civil War in the 1640s, composite munitions had long disappeared, replaced by cast iron, with only some of the smaller artillery pieces still regularly using solid lead munitions. By then the character and battlefield role of gunpowder weapons was well-established and firepower often decided the outcome of battles.

### Hand cannons

Determining how many artillery pieces were actually firing, and whether it was fire from both armies, will require more research and experimentation – there is, as yet, no comparative data from any other battlefield. For example, some of the munitions of nearly identical diameter could have been fired from a ‘ribaudequin’ – an artillery piece that could have three or more barrels mounted on a two-wheeled carriage. However, there are so many different diameters present, some of which carry different firing evidence, that there must have been far more than the absolute minimum of ten pieces of artillery and two hand cannons suggested by the calibres.

It is certain that other munitions remain

to be recovered, while some may have been lost in the small areas that are now built up, and a few more were perhaps retrieved by ploughmen in former centuries, though no record of this has yet been found.

The importance of Bosworth is not that it is the first place where such guns were used in battle. Nor did it see their first large-scale use – the Swiss captured 400 guns when they defeated the Burgundian army at Grandson in 1476. Neither was it the guns that won the battle.

No, the great excitement of the discoveries at Bosworth is that it opens the door on the archaeological study of the origins of firepower. It shows that where sites have not been ravaged by treasure hunters, archaeology may reveal the numbers and sizes of guns actually used on the battlefield, where they were positioned and the intensity of fire they laid down. Complemented by firing experiments and the application of various techniques of scientific analysis, the evidence from the lead munitions may even provide clues as to the construction, range and effectiveness of the guns themselves. **H**



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**Dr Glenn Foard**, who directed the Bosworth investigation, is reader in battlefield archaeology at the University of Huddersfield

### DISCOVER MORE

#### BOOKS

- **Bosworth 1485: A Battlefield Rediscovered** by Glenn Foard and Anne Curry (Oxbow, 2013)
- **The Battle of Bosworth** by Michael Bennett (The History Press, 2000)

#### WEBSITES

- **The Bosworth Heritage Centre:** [bosworthbattlefield.com](http://bosworthbattlefield.com)
- More details on battlefields in Britain can be found on the **Battlefields Trust UK Resource Centre:** [battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre](http://battlefieldstrust.com/resource-centre)
- Reports on **registered battlefields in England** can be found at [english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/battlefields](http://english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/battlefields)



# HENRY VII

A portrait of Henry VII, painted in 1505. His claim to the throne was tenuous and he had to see off a number of pretenders, yet he proved a canny and competent ruler, modernising the justice system and filling the crown's coffers

## SURVIVOR AND STABILISER



## Richard III's Tudor successor set the blueprint for a dynasty that was to make England a global power, says **Steven Gunn**

**H**enry VII is the inscrutable Tudor. Less charismatic than Henry VIII or Elizabeth, less tragic than Edward or Mary, he stands no realistic chance in a Most Famous Tudor competition. But that is no reason to forget him.

We should admire Henry first for his tenacity. When he was propelled from exile to the English throne in 1485 by the sudden death of Edward IV, Richard III's seizure of the crown and the bloody battle of Bosworth, six of the previous nine English kings had been deposed. And the average was getting worse: each of the previous four had lost the crown – one of them, the hapless Henry VI, twice.

One quarter French, one quarter Welsh, one quarter descended from John of Gaunt by his mistress, Henry's claim to the throne of England was hardly compelling. Yet he defeated pretender after pretender – Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, Edmund de la Pole – and clung to power. He made a virtue of healing old divisions by marrying Edward's daughter, Elizabeth of York – a match symbolised by the red-and-white Tudor rose – and breeding sons to succeed him. Though two sons died, the third ascended safely to the throne as Henry VIII. Henry senior was the first king in nearly a century to pass on the crown successfully to his son.

### **No laughing matter**

Henry VII was not just a survivor but a stabiliser. He was less trusting, less generous and less relaxed than many of his subjects might have liked: he is recorded as laughing in public only once. He put more faith in those he had seen tested in the crises of 1483–89 than in young noblemen who thought they ought to govern because of their titles and blood. He took more advice than previous kings from lawyers and financial administrators, men who told him what the crown's powers were and how he might use them to tighten his grip on the kingdom. He used fines as a means of political control, to punish disobedience or offences against his rights. His richer subjects did not like it, but losing your money to Henry VII was better than losing your head to Henry VIII.

He strengthened the crown both financially and in its ability to do justice.

Wealth could not guarantee the safety of an incompetent king, but it could make domestic and international politics easier to navigate for a competent one. Henry expanded the crown's lands, drove up the customs by encouraging trade and attacking smuggling, and began to reform the taxes voted by parliament in time of war, tapping economic growth without retarding it in a way many governments might envy.

The demands of the royal conscience and those of troubled subjects combined to make justice a key to good kingship. Henry offered his people faster and more effective decisions in their lawsuits through the expanding judicial activity of the king's council, which would develop into the courts of Star Chamber and Requests.

He did the same in regions far from Westminster, with revived councils to oversee Wales and the north. In the counties, justices of the peace were more numerous and better supervised. In small towns and villages the urge for stability coming up from below – stirred by patchy population growth, industrial development and the mobile, restless youth that came with them – met the determination to enforce order coming down from the king and his councillors.

Henry's achievements may not be as spectacular as those of his son and grandchildren, but he laid the foundations for every aspect of later Tudor rule. The calculated magnificence of Richmond Palace and his chapel at Westminster paved the way for Hampton Court and Nonsuch.

He spread everywhere the family badges that would brand English kingship for the next century, and which mark coins, tourist-board signs and parliamentary buildings to the present day. His patronage – both of church reformers such as Bishop John Fisher and the Franciscan Observants, and of lawyers who attacked the church's

jurisdiction and skimmed off its wealth – foreshadowed the mix of piety and power-play in the coming Reformation. His use of parliament to address problems in government and society prepared it for its role in the bigger changes ahead. His low-born but talented ministers – Reynold Bray, Thomas Lovell, Richard Empson, Edmund Dudley – were the forerunners of the meritocratic statesmen to come: Cromwell, Paget, Cecil, Bacon and the rest. He tied his family by marriage into the network of European dynasties, had his say in the politics of Italy, France and the Netherlands, and pursued alliances that favoured English trade, above all the cloth exports on which so many of his peoples' jobs depended.

It used to be said that the Middle Ages ended with Henry's reign. That is a gross simplification, but we should not lose sight of the changes afoot. Henry's government first made widespread use of printing, first welcomed Italian Renaissance artists and gave the heirs to the throne a classical education, and first sent permanent diplomatic representatives to multiple foreign courts. His was the first administration to establish a navy with big new warships as a permanent arm of the state, the first to legislate against enclosure to defend the common people at a time of economic change, and the first to patronise voyages of discovery to claim England's place among the European global empires.

Henry made the first secure peace with France after the Hundred Years' War and the first secure peace with the Scots after the Scottish Wars of Independence. The marriage alliance by which his daughter Margaret married James IV King of Scots would lead to the union of the crowns a century later in the person of his great-great-grandson James VI and I, and beyond that to the making of the United Kingdom. How's that for a long-term achievement? **H**

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**Steven Gunn** teaches British and European history between 1330 and 1700 at Merton College, Oxford

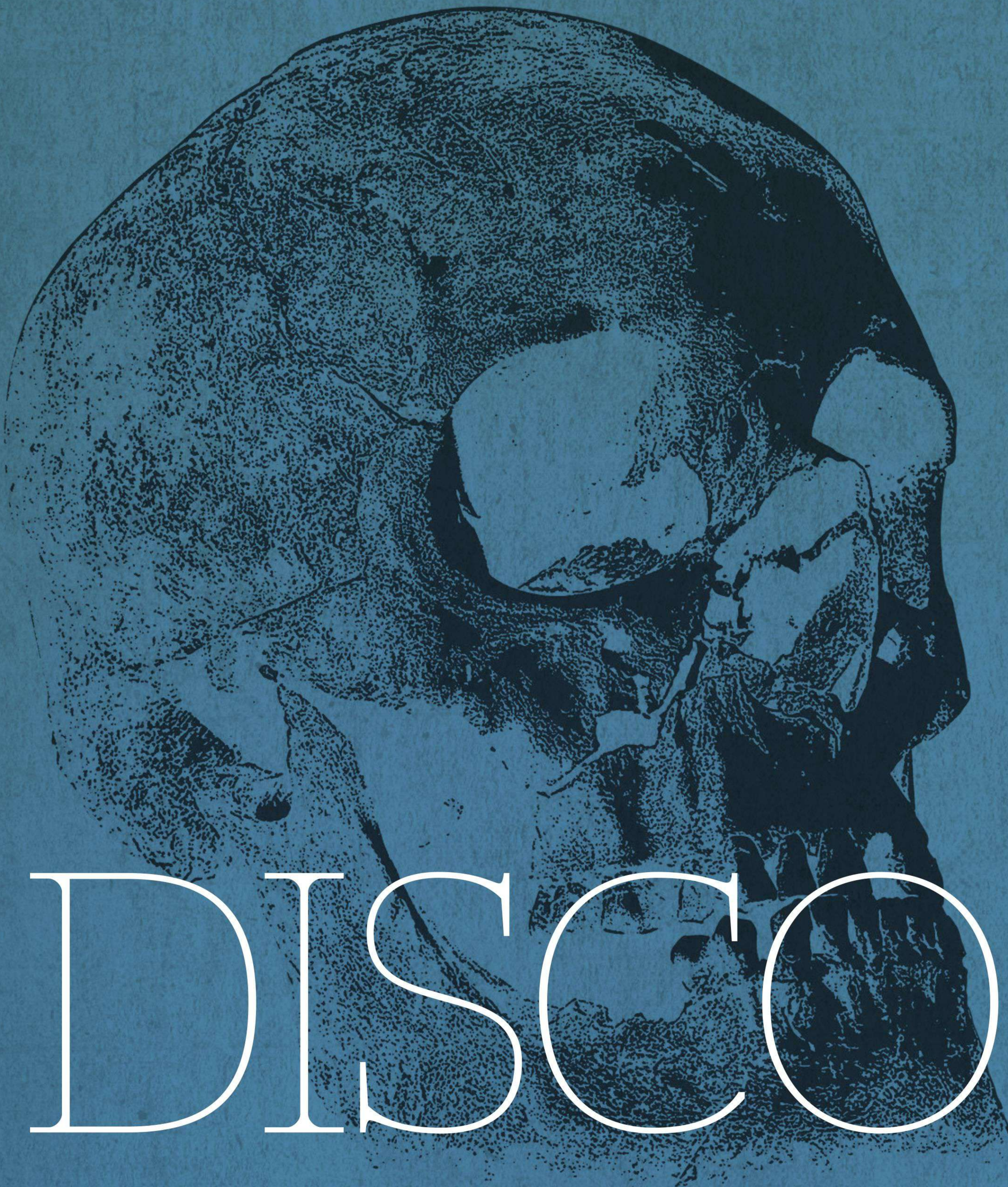
### **DISCOVER MORE**

#### **BOOKS**

- **Winter King: The Dawn of Tudor England** by Thomas Penn (Allen Lane, 2011)
- **Early Tudor Government, 1485-1558** by Steven Gunn (Macmillan, 1995)

“Henry VII was the first English king in nearly a century to **pass on the crown successfully** to his son”





# DISCO



Historians and experts trace the journey of  
Richard's remains from car park to cathedral – and  
explore the lessons that we can learn from the story

# VERY



# RICHARD III'S

Emma McFarnon charts the journey taken by the king's remains,

2012

August/September

Experts from the University of Leicester searching a grave underneath a Leicester car park – in the remains of the choir of the church of the Franciscan friary (Grey Friars) – **discover a skeleton**. They announce that “strong circumstantial evidence” points to the skeleton being that of Richard III.

2013

4 February

“It is the academic conclusion of the University of Leicester that **the individual exhumed at Grey Friars in August 2012 is indeed King Richard III**,” says lead archaeologist Richard Buckley, citing a wealth of evidence including radiocarbon dating, DNA and bone analysis, and archaeological results. Under the terms of the exhumation licence granted to the university on 3 September, the remains should be reburied in Leicester Cathedral.



2014

13 March

**The judicial review gets under way.** Leicester City Council is now a defendant in the case, alongside the Ministry of Justice and the University of Leicester. York Minster and Leicester Cathedral are also involved as interested parties.

2013

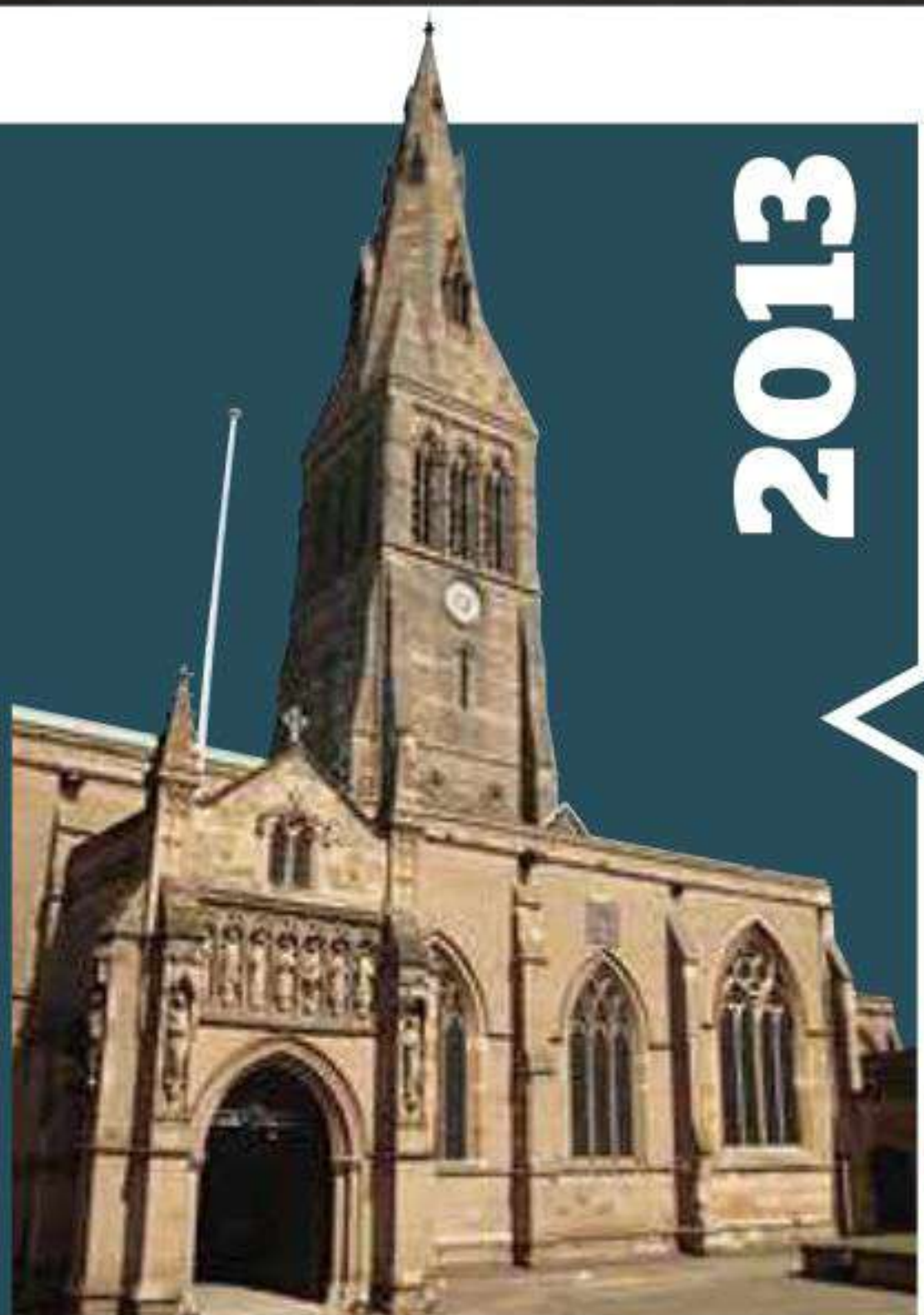
26 November

A **judicial review into the licence granted to the University of Leicester authorising Richard's reburial in the city is adjourned**, after the court agrees to allow Leicester City Council to make representations as a party.

2013

24 September

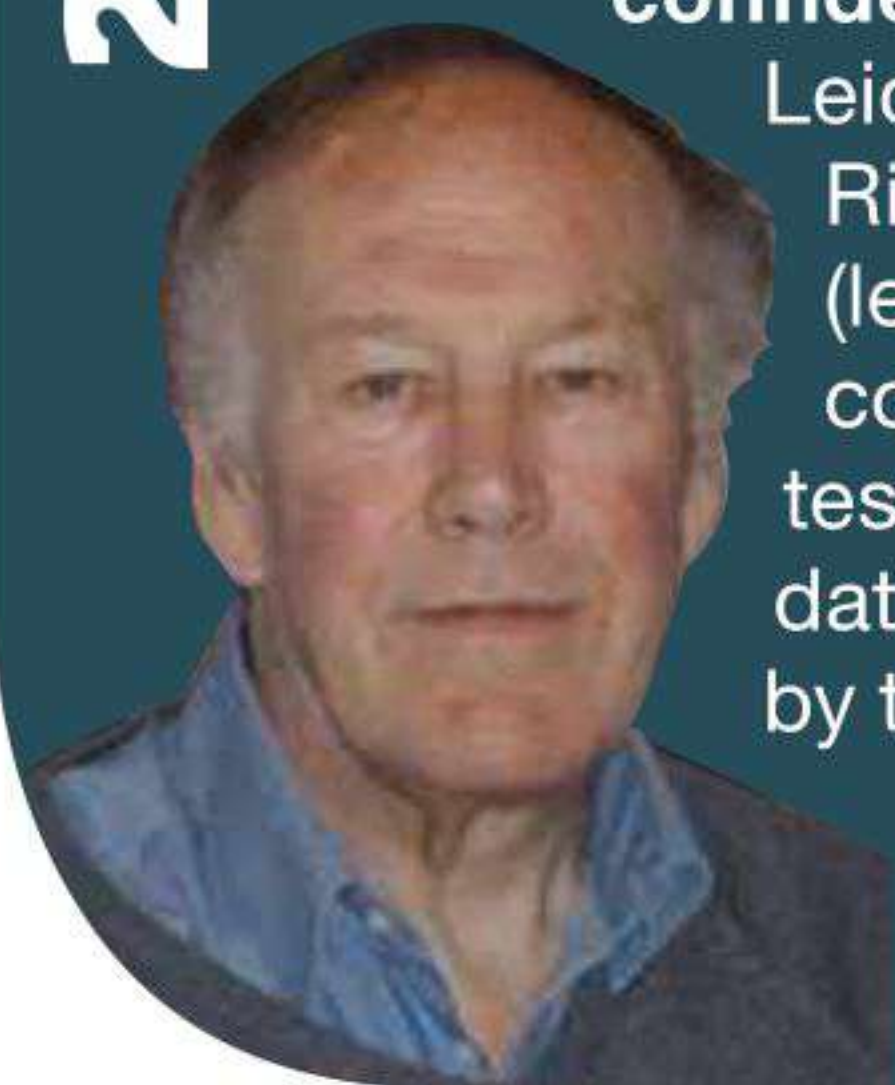
A **petition calling for a parliamentary debate on where to bury Richard III** misses its target. The online petition, which needs 100,000 names to force a debate on the decision to inter him in Leicester (whose cathedral is pictured right), reportedly attracts 31,260 names.



2014

26 March

Two leading experts claim that **archaeologists “cannot say with any confidence”** that bones found in Leicester are those of Richard III. Michael Hicks (left) and Martin Biddle raise concerns about the DNA testing and radiocarbon dating, which are defended by the University of Leicester. *Read more about the debate on pages 102–7.*



2014

23 May

The Plantagenet Alliance **loses its High Court battle**. The court concludes: “There are no public law grounds for the Court interfering with the decisions in question. In the result, therefore, the Claimant's application for Judicial Review is dismissed.” Professor Lin Foxhall of the University of Leicester (right) says: “We are jubilant. This is a victory for common sense.”



2014



2015

26 March

Richard's remains will be **reburied in Leicester Cathedral** after a procession past Bosworth and through villages linked with the king's 1485 campaign.



2015

7 January

A **rosary to be placed inside Richard's coffin is blessed** at the Clare Priory in Suffolk. The beads and crucifix, donated by historian John Ashdown-Hill and similar to the one pictured right, reflect Richard's Catholic faith. The priory is linked with Richard's mother, Cecily Neville – several members of her family are buried there.



2014

12 December

An **online ballot for a seat at the reburial ceremony of Richard III** in Leicester Cathedral in 2015 opens; just 200 seats will be available for the public. Some 5,000 people apply on the first day, and BBC News reports more than 13,500 ballot entries by the end of December 2014.



# REDISCOVERY

from a car park to their final resting place in Leicester Cathedral

2013

5 February

The future resting place of Richard III's remains becomes the focus of rival online **campaigns by those who believe that the king should be reinterred at York Minster** (right) and those who champion Leicester's claim. York's campaign includes an e-petition garnering 31,349 signatures. Richard had planned the construction of a large chantry chapel at the Minster – possibly suggesting that he had wished to be buried there.



2013

26 March

Some 15 of Richard III's collateral (non-direct) descendants – comprising the Plantagenet Alliance Limited – announce their decision to **seek a judicial review** into the decision authorising his reburial in Leicester. The alliance says that relatives should have been consulted by the government over the reburial, and states that it wants the licence to be overturned and the king to be laid to rest in York Minster. The relevant papers are lodged in the High Court a few weeks later.

23 September

Members of the Richard III Society **request that their donations not be used to fund the king's tomb at Leicester Cathedral** because they disapprove of the design, despite initial support. The reburial is put on hold in November when officials defer a decision over plans for the tomb.

2013

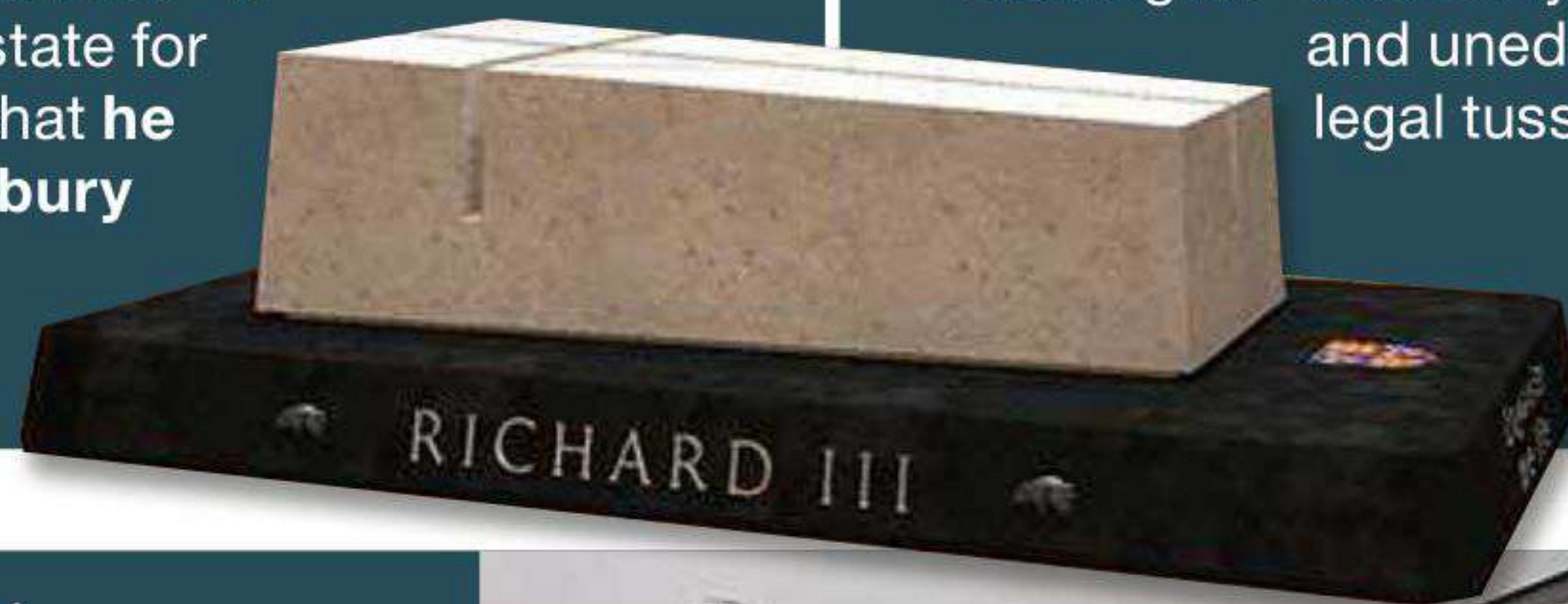
19 September

Leicester Cathedral **unveils the initial design for Richard III's tomb** (right). The plans indicate that the former king would be laid to rest in a raised tomb of fossil limestone with a deeply carved cross. Subsequent small revisions are made to the design up until June 2014. Meanwhile, the secretary of state for justice, Chris Grayling, says that **he will defend the decision to bury the remains of Richard in Leicester**.

2013

16 August

The Plantagenet Alliance is **granted permission for a judicial review**. Mr Justice Haddon-Cave grants the review "on all grounds", but warns parties against starting an "unseemly, undignified and unedifying" legal tussle.



17 August

New research reveals that, after becoming king in 1483, Richard III **began to drink more wine and enjoyed a diet heavily featuring lavish foods** such as swan and heron. Cutting-edge isotope analysis of bone and tooth material indicates a change in the king's diet in later years. It is also confirmed that Richard had moved away from Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire, by the age of seven, before returning to eastern England as an adolescent.

2014

27 August

The discovery of Richard III has **boosted Leicester's economy by about £45m**, figures reveal. According to a trustee of the King Richard III Visitor Centre, the Plantagenet king's discovery probably helped drive an increase in tourism three per cent higher than in other comparable areas.



The Richard III Discovery Centre in Leicester

3 December

Professor Michael Hicks **calls into question the validity of the new data** announced by the University of Leicester the previous day, saying that the new genealogical research "does not carry us any further forward. It tells us that two modern relatives share the same mitochondrial DNA as the bones, not that the bones belong to Richard III."

2014

2 December

New genealogical research **proves "beyond reasonable doubt"** that the remains found beneath the car park are those of Richard III. According to a team of researchers from the University of Leicester, analysis of all available evidence "confirms identity of King Richard III to the point of 99.999 per cent at its most conservative".

2014

17 September

Richard was **probably killed by two blows to the head** during a "sustained attack", research shows. Forensic teams at the University of Leicester working on his skull (left) found that the king suffered 11 injuries before his death at Bosworth in 1485 – three of which could each have been fatal.





Michael Jones and Philippa Langley at the London office of publisher John Murray. Their book chronicles the lead-up to the discovery of Richard III beneath a Leicester car park in 2012





# THE **HISTORY** INTERVIEW

## MICHAEL JONES AND PHILIPPA LANGLEY

*“Richard III’s reputation has been dragged through the mire for 500 years”*

*Michael Jones and Philippa Langley, co-authors of a book about the discovery of Richard III’s remains – the result of a project organised and funded by Langley – talk to **Matt Elton** about the dig and its challenges, and offer their take on the controversial monarch’s life*

### **How did you feel when you began to suspect that you had found the site where Richard was buried?**

**Philippa Langley:** The research, which was key, was looking really good. There was a lot of information to back us up, but the belief still wasn’t there in terms of the academic community. It really was an uphill struggle, but I think we just had to say: “Let’s just cut the tarmac and see.”

**Michael Jones:** Philippa and I first met in 2002, and I think it was in 2003 that we started having conversations about bringing the real Richard centre stage. When we finally found him, I remember a feeling of awe and excitement as the events unfolded. It was incredible.

### **What did you think when you found that the skeleton was curved?**

**PL:** That was a big moment for me, because I’d spent so long researching Richard III. He was very physically able, so to be told – and it’s such an inappropriate word, but we don’t have another – that he was hunchbacked didn’t fit with everything I knew about the man. But the specialists were telling me that he was, and when you looked into the grave you could see that he was

hunched. The evidence was staring me right in the face. It absolutely threw me, though. I just felt that, if Richard *was* proved to be the hunchbacked king that Shakespeare had portrayed, it would set us back completely despite all the work that we had tried to do in looking at the real man. So many historians are tied to the Tudor propaganda, and I thought we’d never get to the real man.

**MJ:** I found it very moving. Richard’s condition was used as a judgment by the Tudors and in Shakespeare. It was seen as a deformity, one that physically mirrored a deformity of the mind. I felt a profound sense of sympathy: I didn’t see the deformed or evil individual, I saw a person under an oppressive weight, and this got me thinking about moments in his life and career.

### **Philippa, do you find that your role in the Richard III Society makes it harder to convince people of your neutral viewpoint?**

**PL:** No, I don’t think so. Would I say that I’m neutral? I wouldn’t say that I am, actually, because I do believe that Richard has been maligned, and I do believe that his reputation has been

pretty much dragged through the mire for 500 years. But the Richard III Society has a mission statement that says that the traditional accounts of Richard are neither supported by the facts nor reasonably tenable, and I have to say that I concur with that mission statement 100 per cent.

I would say that my position is that I need to have an open mind; as a screen-writer, I couldn’t go into the research thinking that he was a saint, because I’m looking for the human being. We’re all complex, we’re all conflicted. That’s how we are – that’s the human condition. So what I’m looking for in Richard is what made *his* ‘human condition’.

### **What do you think is the truth about the princes in the Tower?**

**MJ:** I think it would be useful to say, first of all, where we agree! We both believe that Richard had a viable claim to the throne, despite it later being vigorously suppressed by the Tudors. We agree that Richard believed in this claim, and that quite a substantial number of other people did, too. And that’s important, because it means that it was not necessary for him to kill the princes, the sons



THE **HISTORY** INTERVIEW**MICHAEL JONES AND PHILIPPA LANGLEY**

Michael Jones is the author of several books exploring the life of Richard III, including *Bosworth, 1485: The Psychology of a Battle* (2002). Philippa Langley works as a screenwriter and secretary of the Scottish branch of the Richard III Society. She financed and oversaw the archaeological dig of the Leicester car park beneath which Richard's remains were found in 2012

“The real Richard was buried under a mound of Tudor propaganda. But there’s another burial: of the endless debate over whether he was ‘bad’ or ‘good’ ”

of Edward IV, to take the throne. So that is our common ground, and that puts us in a different camp from a lot of historians and a lot of people, but we feel that is good.

What we disagree on is the fact that I feel that cruel necessity, and an attempt to rescue or remove the princes from the Tower early on in Richard’s reign, may have forced the king’s hand. In other words, the survival of Richard’s dynasty was at stake. Philippa disagrees: she feels that he wouldn’t have done that. Our belief is that a debate is very healthy, very honest, because we don’t know what happened, and we believe that debating it will help push research onwards. That’s what really needs to happen: we need to keep discussing this. And, hopefully, more evidence may come to light.

**Where do you think Richard’s remains should be buried?**

**PL:** I think we’re both of the opinion that we just had to let the due process of law take place. We definitely agree that Richard needs to be buried with decency,

and dignity, and with honour, because we now know that in 1485 he wasn’t given any of that. And I think it’s important that we make a powerful statement. By reburying him in this way, we’re saying that we recognise what went on in the past, but we’re not repeating it.

**What surprised you most in the course of this whole project?**

**PL:** I think, for me, one of the things about the project that really hit home was some of the mythology that we’ve been able to blow away. For instance, we now know that his body wasn’t thrown into the river Soar, and that he didn’t have a withered arm. We know that his head didn’t crack Bow Bridge when he was slung over a horse coming back into Leicester. We know that he didn’t have kyphosis [a disability causing the head to be pushed on to the chest].

Those are just some of the myths that have been shattered already by this project, and I think that what I’d like is that the project reveals this mythology, the stories that grew up around Richard,

that subsequently became his history.

**MJ:** There was something extraordinarily powerful in getting a sense of what his face might have been like – particularly with so much distortion around his story. For me, the book represents two journeys: the search for the remains, and the search for the real Richard. In a sense, the remains were buried, and so was the real Richard – under a mound of Tudor propaganda. But there’s another burial, which is of this endless debate over whether he was ‘bad’ or ‘good’. I believe that the book shows that he was a complicated, extraordinary, charismatic man who could also be politically ruthless. Our hope is that, instead of seeing him either as dark or white, people will get a view of a real man living in a very violent and turbulent period of history. **H**

**The King’s Grave: The Search for Richard III** by Philippa Langley and Michael Jones is published by John Murray (2013)

**Watch a video of this interview online at [historyextra.com/richardiii](http://historyextra.com/richardiii)**

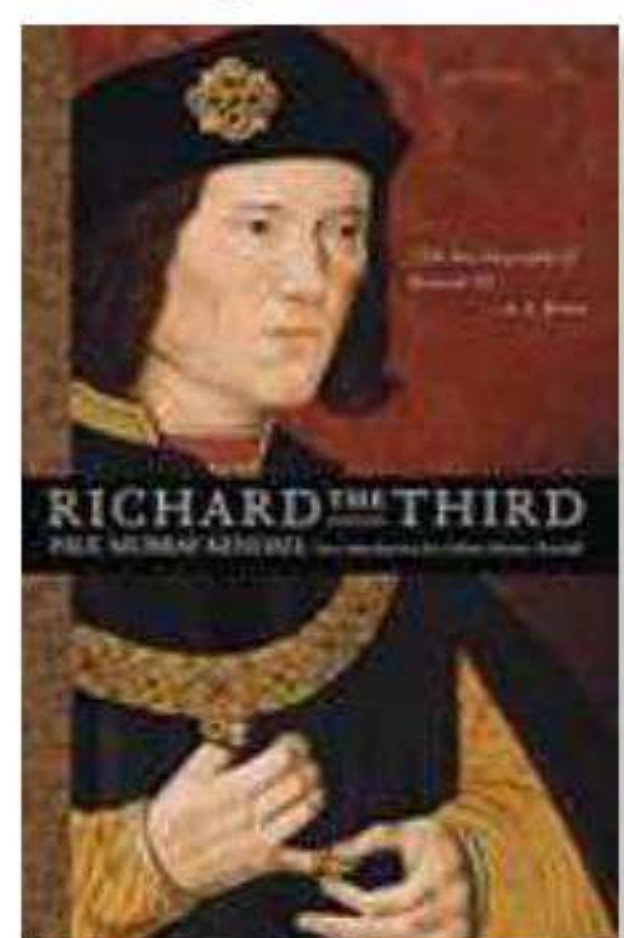


# Reading about Richard

**CHRIS SKIDMORE** introduces some of the best books about the controversial king

Not a year seems to pass without a new book on Richard III being published. Interest in England's most controversial king seems to have continued unabated ever since the 16th century, when Thomas More wrote his own colourful history – if it can be called that – of Richard's reign, and Shakespeare immortalised the last Plantagenet king with his entirely fictional cry: "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!"

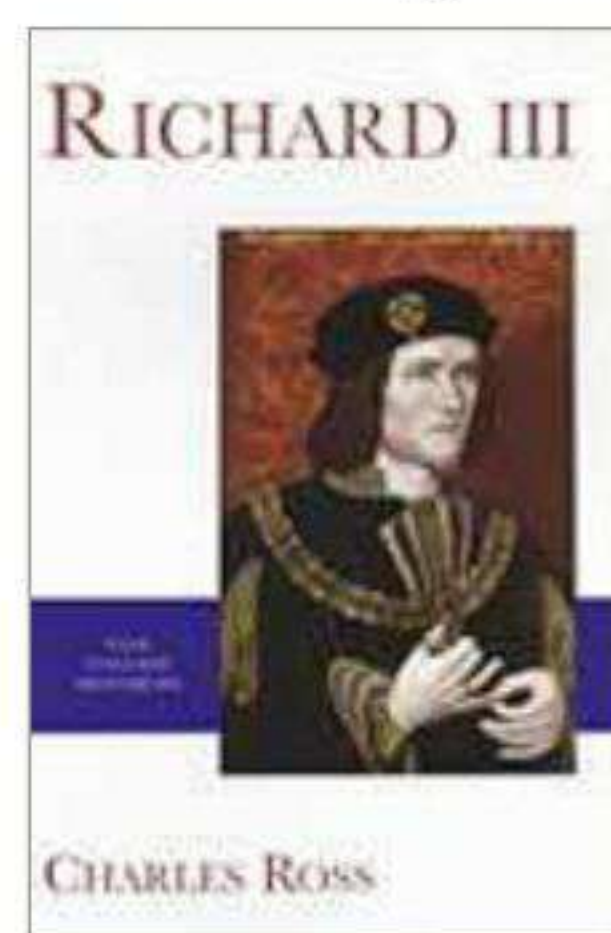
The historiography of Richard's life and character over the centuries is itself a weighty enough topic to merit its own book, analysing how Richard became the victim of Tudor propaganda and myth. Fortunately, in the past 50 years historians and writers have been able to produce more balanced histories of Richard's reign that can provide anyone with an interest in the king more than enough material to digest.



It was **Paul Murray Kendall's** 1955 biography **Richard III** (latest edition WW Norton, 2002) that helped to begin the rehabilitation of Richard's reputation from the child-

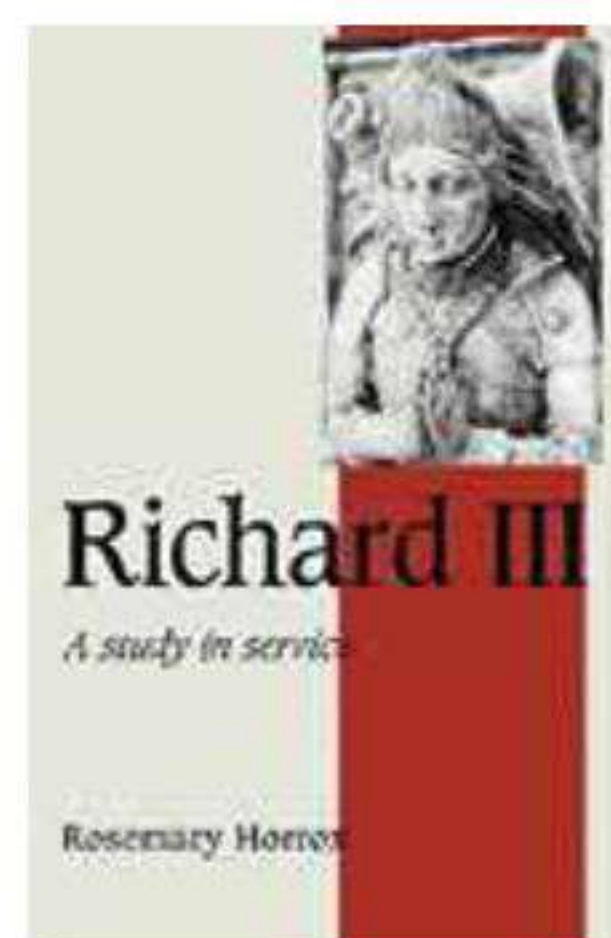
murdering villain of lore. In many ways this remains – for now, at least – the fullest narrative history, from Richard's youth and career as Duke of Gloucester to his final moments on the battle of Bosworth. Kendall, himself an English professor, was one of the first to return to the original archives to document Richard's life. He painted a portrait of a king concerned with the welfare of his subjects, the poor and oppressed, and who dutifully served his brother Edward IV. Thanks to further research into Richard's life, Kendall's biography has dated. But though his florid prose and obvious partiality towards his subject

means that the book could hardly be classed as a work of academic merit, it remains a good introduction to Richard.



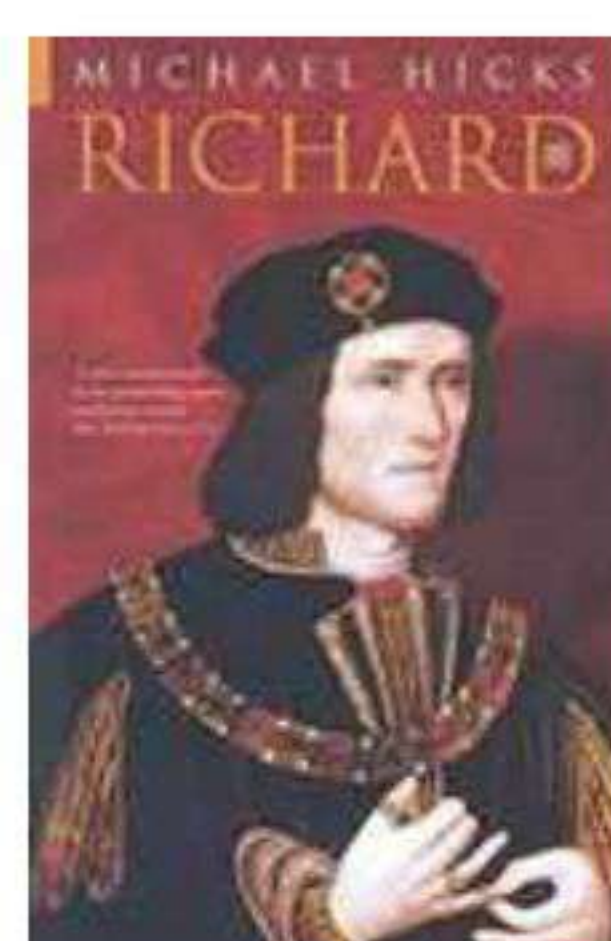
It was not until **Charles Ross's** 1981 **Richard III** in the Yale English Monarchs series (latest edition Yale UP, 1999) that the king received proper scholarly attention.

Ross is determined to sit above the good king/bad king debate, and at times his impeccable analysis can be somewhat dry. Nevertheless, he remains one of the leading scholars of the 15th century, and this biography is essential reading for the serious student.

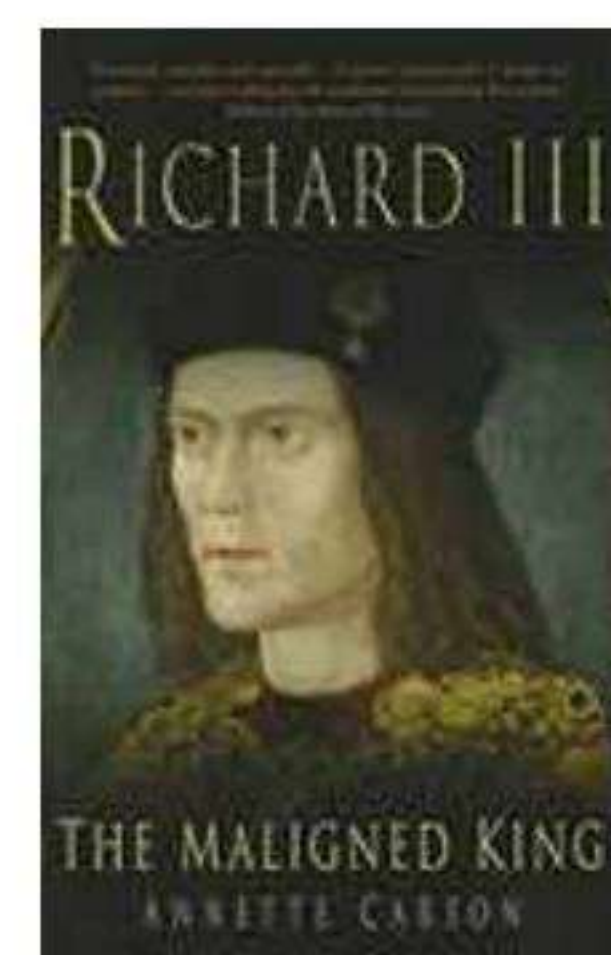


By far the most outstanding work on the king has been done by two modern historians, **Rosemary Horrox** and **Michael Hicks**. Horrox's 1989 monograph **Richard III: A Study In**

**Service** (latest edition Cambridge UP, 1991) is marked by its brilliant research into unused archives, combined with insight and original analysis. It is hard to imagine the work ever being bettered, but there's a caveat: this is not for the general reader. Horrox's main concern is to investigate how Richard built up his northern support base, and how he lost support as king during the Duke of Buckingham's rebellion and through to the desertion of members of his nobility at

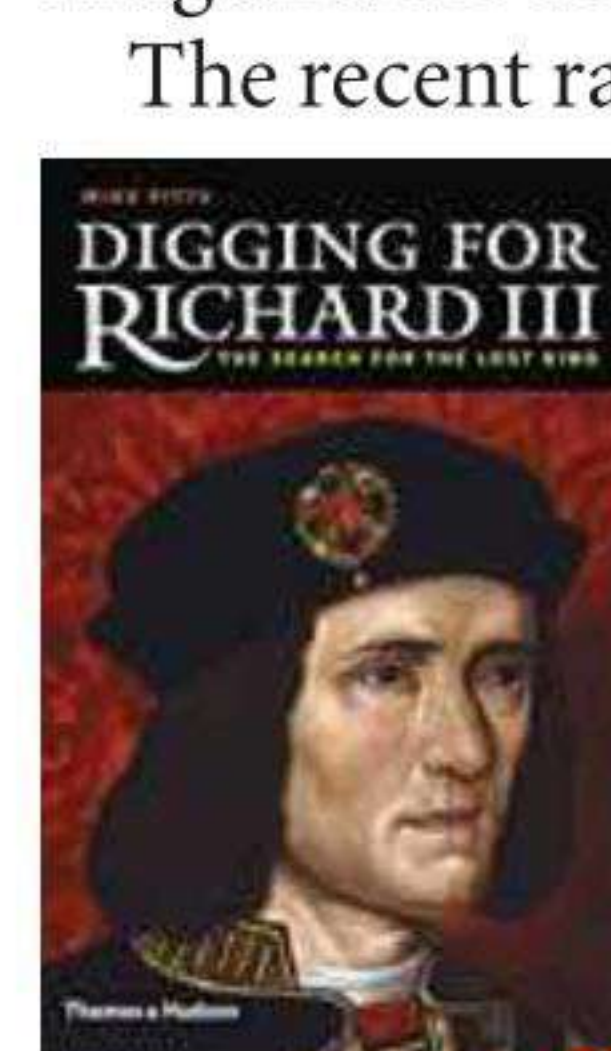


Bosworth. **Michael Hicks's** 1991 book **Richard III** (latest edition The History Press, 2003) falls into the more hostile camp of books on Richard, but presents a good summary of Hicks'



research, which is also evident in the excellent collection of his essays **Richard III and his Rivals** (Hambledon Press, 1991).

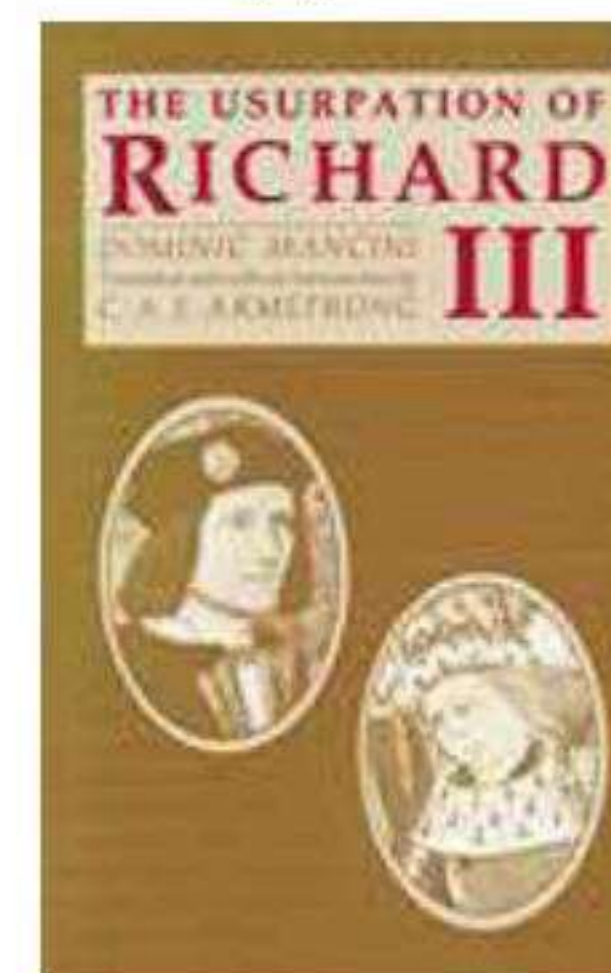
More recent texts on Richard have included some controversial works by **Michael K Jones** on his motivations at Bosworth, and by **Annette Carson**, whose **Richard III: The Malignant King** (The History Press, 2009) restates the Ricardian view on the king and his decision to take the throne.



The recent rash of books on the discovery included contributions from almost everyone involved with the 2012 dig, but perhaps the best impartial approach comes in **Digging For Richard III** (Thames and

Hudson, 2014) by **Mike Pitts**.

For more adventurous readers, my personal favourite still remains the remarkable original account by **Dominic Mancini**, an Italian who was visiting England when Richard took the throne in 1483. Discovered in the 1930s and finally published in English translation in



1969, **The Usurpation of Richard III** (ed CAJ Armstrong, Oxford UP, 1969) is a powerful first-hand account of life in the capital during one of the most eventful years in English history.



**Chris Skidmore** is an author and historian who also serves as Conservative MP for Kingswood in east Bristol





# BODY OF EVIDENCE





The discovery of Richard's body stirred passions among historians and public alike – but what truths have the bones revealed? Writing in 2013, **Mark Ormrod** explored how they have changed our understanding of the king, and contemplated the future for his remains



The discovery of Richard III's remains under a Leicester car park has been one of the greatest archaeological breakthroughs of our age. It has revealed the remarkable extent of public interest in England's most controversial medieval king, and the truly global reach of his life and legend. Everyone, it seems, wants a piece of Richard. But some commentators have questioned whether anything has really changed. Are we all the victims of hype? Or has the dig really helped resolve that ultimate conundrum – the character of Richard III?

First, let's think about the physical appearance of the king. There was a dramatic moment in a press conference on 4 February 2013 when it was revealed that Richard suffered from a severe curvature of the spine. Without this condition, he might have stood 5 feet 8 inches tall; with it, he was significantly shorter, and walked with a pronounced stoop. For some time, historians have been reluctant to accept the near-contemporary descriptions of Richard as a 'crouch-back', on the

grounds that they were part of the Tudors' strenuous efforts to defame the last Plantagenet king. The skeleton proves that some of the other physical deformities that Richard was later alleged to have suffered, including a withered arm, are fictitious. But the revelation that he suffered from severe scoliosis raises really important questions about the challenges he faced in presenting and proving himself as prince and king.

Medieval society was not always kind to physical abnormality, which was often seen as the mark of the Devil. In theory, for example, Richard's hunchback debarred him from admission to the clergy – a career that might, under other circumstances, have been a real option for him. It was also a major impediment to his destiny as a knight. We now know that the condition developed in his early teens, during the first years of the reign of his brother, Edward IV. By the time Richard emerged onto the political stage during the anti-Yorkist rebellions of 1469–70, he had evidently undergone an arduous and painful training to compensate for his physical problems. His subsequent military

career – and his very presence on the battlefield at Bosworth – can

now be seen as remarkable triumphs over disability, and testimony to a steely will.

Next, we might consider what this discovery might do for our knowledge of other medieval kings and princes. The greatest and continuing controversy about Richard revolves around the allegation that he was responsible for the deaths of his nephews, Edward V and Richard, Duke of York – the so-called 'princes in the Tower'. The historical sources have never yielded definitive evidence to resolve this debate. But the Leicester dig has shown us that modern scientific analysis can compensate, in remarkable ways, for the absence of written records. If we could disinter the remains of two youths discovered in the Tower of London in the 17th century and now buried at Westminster Abbey, we could compare their DNA with that of their allegedly wicked uncle and know, one way or another, whether the remains are indeed those of boys of royal birth.

### Solving royal mysteries

The precedent is also of importance for other royal mysteries. DNA testing could, for example, resolve the modern debate over whether Edward II was actually buried in the tomb at Gloucester Cathedral that bears his effigy – or whether the king, deposed in 1327, actually escaped the wrath of his enemies by fleeing the realm.

Antiquaries in the 18th and 19th centuries did a lot of damage by opening up the tombs of medieval kings, nobles and bishops. Their ghoulish interventions fell out of fashion in Victorian and later times, and today there is a strong reluctance on the part of the crown, the church and the law to allow the exhumation of royal remains buried in consecrated ground. It therefore remains to be seen whether the careful protocols observed at Leicester will allow a new age of exploration in the monuments of monarchs.

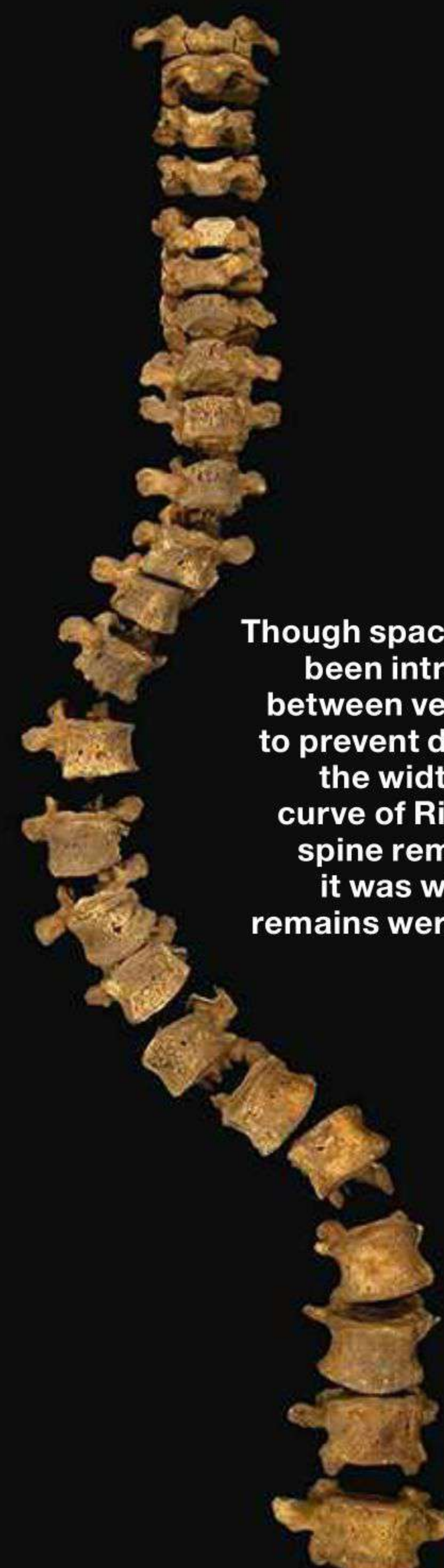
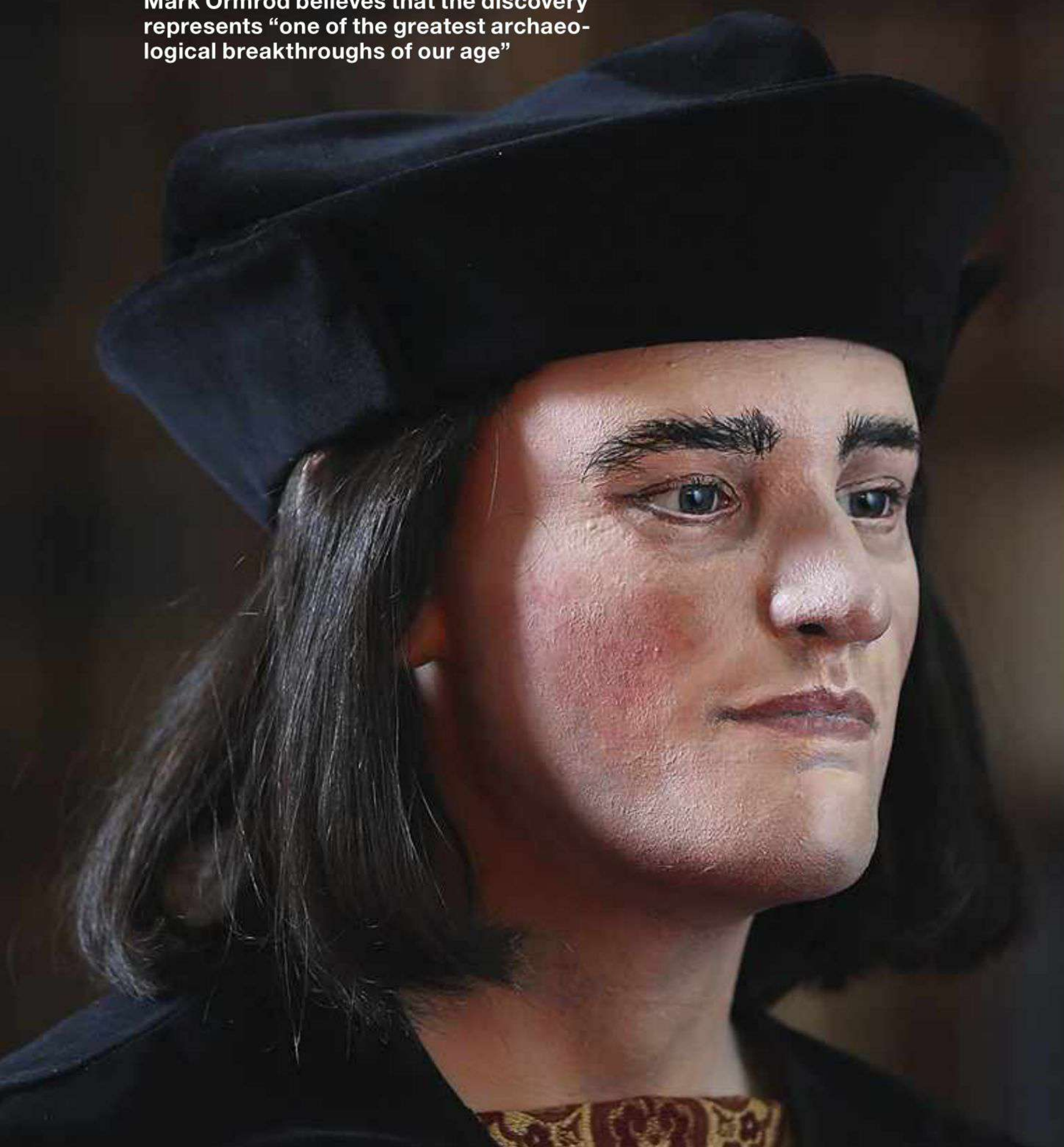
The Leicester dig provides a cautionary tale about believing received opinion. The local legend that Richard's body was disinterred at the dissolution of the monasteries and dumped ignominiously in the nearby river has had far too many people convinced, for generations, that no tomb – and no body – could ever be found. Sometimes it is the persistence of the enthusiast, against all the odds, that can break down the barriers of disbelief.

The skull shows two possibly fatal injuries, including a section that was sliced off (at the bottom of this picture)





The reconstructed face of Richard III. Mark Ormrod believes that the discovery represents “one of the greatest archaeological breakthroughs of our age”



Though spaces have been introduced between vertebrae to prevent damage, the width of the curve of Richard’s spine remains as it was when the remains were found

“He showed such favour to York Minster as to suggest that **he intended to break with royal tradition** and be buried there”

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER-REX

Finally, it is worth contemplating what the discovery of Richard III’s remains has done for modern British identities. Richard’s marriage into the great northern family, the Nevilles, and his success in ruling the north of England during the reign of his brother, led many – both in his own time and later – to see him as a kind of

adopted northerner or honorary Yorkshireman. Richard’s own vaunting political ambition, which led him to take the throne in 1483, suggests that he was never so provincially minded, but had a genuinely national and international outlook. Nevertheless, the very problems he faced as king may well have led him to sentimentalise his relationship with the north, and with the city of York in particular. He showed such favour to the great Gothic church of York Minster as to strongly suggest that he intended to break with royal tradition and be buried there. That, as any York taxi driver will tell you, is certainly what the north expected.

Richard III lived in a time when the mortal remains of kings were often dug up and reinterred in distant locations thought more fitting to their (or their successors’) sense of majesty. Westminster Abbey, St George’s Chapel in Windsor and Fotheringhay Church all have as good a claim as York Minster to provide a natural

resting place for the bones of the last Yorkist king. When Richard is reinterred in Leicester Cathedral, we can be certain of one thing: it will not be by his choice.

So: whither Richard III? The worldwide interest in the discoveries at Leicester and the ensuing battle of the bones sparked a rush of biographies. Some will claim, on the basis of the new facial reconstruction, to reveal something new about the true personality of a man unjustly vilified by Shakespeare.

But it is through the horrific injuries that leave their mark on the skull and limbs of the royal skeleton that we can surely develop important new understandings about the extraordinary brutality of medieval warfare and the vengeful humiliation that Henry Tudor’s soldiers and spin-doctors inscribed upon the body and memory of our last medieval king. **H**

Mark Ormrod is professor of history at the University of York



# What does the find mean for history?

Following the February 2013 confirmation that the Leicester remains were indeed Richard III's, historians and experts shared their views on the discovery – and their opinions on what should happen next

PROFESSOR LIN FOXHALL

## “This is just the start of the story”

“This is only the beginning: there is more research to follow, before re-interment, on the genetics and the bones, including Richard's health and diet. We will not be able to study them after reburial. And we need to learn more about the awesome Greyfriars precinct: the church, the other buildings and the role of the friars in the life of medieval Leicester. Finally, scholars will need time to consider the impact of this major new body of material evidence for interpreting the literary and historical sources of the period. We'll need to reread the texts and rethink the history.

Professor Lin Foxhall is head of the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester

CHRIS SKIDMORE MP

## “A state funeral will allow people to pay their respects”

“After scientific tests have been completed on Richard's body, there is the thorny issue of where and exactly how he should be buried. Leicester seems the logical place, especially since the location of the reburial was agreed before the archaeological investigations began, though I'm sure various cities such as York will continue to fight their corner.

I've been campaigning for a form of state funeral for Richard. This need not be an excuse for a public holiday or a Westminster Abbey service, but the opportunity for the body to lie in state for people to pay their respects. As for the funeral service, some form of joint ceremony reflecting his Catholic faith needs to be considered. Then the process of re-assessing Richard really begins.

Chris Skidmore MP is author of *Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2013)

NIGEL JONES

## “Richard is fit only to be buried in the car park where he was found”

“The discovery of Richard's bones – ironically funded by the Richard III Society – has at least laid one Ricardian myth to rest: that his crooked spine was an invention of Tudor propaganda. I only wish that the strange cult of this murderous little tyrant would also lie down and die.

As for his burial place, as far as I'm concerned he should be returned to the Leicester car park. The idea of a state funeral in a church, abbey, minster or cathedral honouring a serial-killing child murderer is almost obscene. Murder is murder, however ancient.

Nigel Jones is a historian, journalist and broadcaster

TOM HOLLAND

## “This find says as much about the British public as it does Richard III”

“The discovery of Richard III's remains is haunted by an obvious irony. A project inspired by the desire to redeem his memory from Tudor propaganda has served to confirm it in much of its details: Richard was indeed a ‘crookback’, and he appears, from the evidence of the stab-wound to his buttock [inflicted after his death], to have been widely hated. Beyond that, even though the discovery of his remains sheds little further light on his reign, it has served to illumine – and to glorious effect – something that many pessimists had doubted: the abiding attachment of the British to their history. Long live King Richard!

Tom Holland is the author of *In the Shadow of the Sword* (Little, Brown, 2012)

NIGEL SAUL

## “Shakespeare the historian was right all along”

“There's no doubt that the unearthing of Richard III's bones at Leicester is the most sensational archaeological discovery for many a year. And scientifically it's come at just the right time, because DNA testing allows us to establish the bones' authenticity.

As for what we've learned, the most important thing is that Richard was deformed after all. Amazingly, Shakespeare was right, not [Scottish mystery novelist] Josephine Tey – which must annoy all the revisionists. Speaking as one who's always admired Shakespeare the historian, I'm enjoying that. As for what next: why not DNA-test the reputed bones of the princes in the Tower?

Nigel Saul is the author of *For Honour and Fame: Chivalry in England, 1066–1500* (Bodley Head, 2011)

ALISON WEIR

## “Richard's bad press was likely deserved”

“The discovery of Richard III's remains changes our perception of so-called propaganda against him. Confirmation that he was indeed the ‘crouchback’ of legend suggests we should re-evaluate other hostile sources. Might they reflect the truth? Maybe, once Richard was dead, people felt free to speak out against him.

His bad press was probably well deserved, but he died in the Christian faith and should be buried where he wished, in York Minster, without fanfare. What might settle the debate about him is a new examination of the bones, thought to be those of the princes in the Tower, in Westminster Abbey.

Alison Weir is the author of *Richard III and The Princes in The Tower* (Vintage, 2014)



The skeleton, minus its feet, as found beneath a Leicester car park

SUZANNAH LIPSCOMB

## “We still know nothing of the king’s character”

“The news that it was indeed Richard III’s body under the tarmac of a council car park caused the Ricardians – loyal members of the Richard III Society – to announce ‘a whole new era for Richard III’. What does that really mean? In practice, the find is something of an own goal for Richard’s supporters. The severely curved spine of the king actually confirms the pronouncements of Tudor writers such as Sir Thomas More, who noted that Richard was “little of stature, ill fetured of limmes, croke backed, his left shoulder much higher then his right”.

Crucially, it tells us nothing new about the character of this much-maligned monarch. Now, if we could compare his DNA to those of the bones found in the Tower, now in Westminster Abbey, and see if they are those of his nephews – the princes – then we might enter ‘a whole new era’.

Suzannah Lipscomb is the author of *A Visitor’s Companion to Tudor England* (Ebury, 2012)

DOMINIC SANDBROOK

## “The discovery is only good for history”

“It’s a shame that some academic historians have been so snobbish and mean-spirited about the discovery of Richard III’s body, though it isn’t very surprising. To most people, though, this is precisely the kind of thing – mysterious and melodramatic – that gets them interested in history in the first place. Richard’s rise and fall is one of the great dramas of our national past. And though the discovery of his remains may not radically alter our view of his reign, it does change our portrait of the man himself – not least because it turns out that the Tudors weren’t completely lying about his physique.

Above all, this is the kind of high-profile event that will have thousands of schoolchildren eagerly discussing the last Plantagenets and the Wars of the Roses. And that can only be a very good thing for history. **H**

Dominic Sandbrook is a historian and author

DR PHIL STONE

## “The discovery will hopefully reopen the debate”

“Clearly, the finding of the remains of Richard III won’t alter anyone’s perception of his character but it may be that the publicity will open up the debate. This man instituted a system of bail, had the laws written in English and introduced the equivalent of a free press.

Perhaps people will start to read about this monarch who did much for this country, and discover that a lot of their prejudice against him just doesn’t hold up to scrutiny when subjected to the true facts of his life and reign. We in the Richard III Society do hope so.

Dr Phil Stone is chairman of the Richard III Society

JULIAN HUMPHRYS

## “We can now put together the final days of the Yorkist dynasty”

“This remarkable discovery, together with the identification of Bosworth battlefield by archaeologists from the Battlefields Trust and Leicester County Council in 2010, means that we can finally piece together the violent last moments of the Yorkist dynasty. I have no strong views on Richard’s reinterment but am mindful of the case of Edward the Martyr, the teenage king murdered at Corfe in AD 978. His remains were discovered at a dig at Shaftesbury in 1931 but arguments over how he should be reburied meant they spent more than 50 years in a Woking bank vault before eventually being reinterred at Brookwood cemetery by the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile.

Julian Humphrys is a regular contributor to *BBC History Magazine*

DAVID HIPSHON

## “Leicester’s zeal is a cause for concern”

“The history of Richard III will not have to be rewritten in the light of the Leicester findings. The wounds to the body confirm what we know about his death in battle, but the spinal curvature suggests that the Tudor hunchback propaganda probably began when his body was stripped on the battlefield and the deformity was seen for the first time.

The remains themselves should go to York Minster, of course. Leicester’s appropriation of Richard has all the hallmarks of the medieval relic industry touting for the pilgrim trade. Their motivation and zeal may, in due course, cast doubt on the objectivity of the research.

David Hipshon is the author of *Richard III* (Routledge, 2010)

SARAH GRISTWOOD

## “The discovery adds sympathy to Richard’s story”

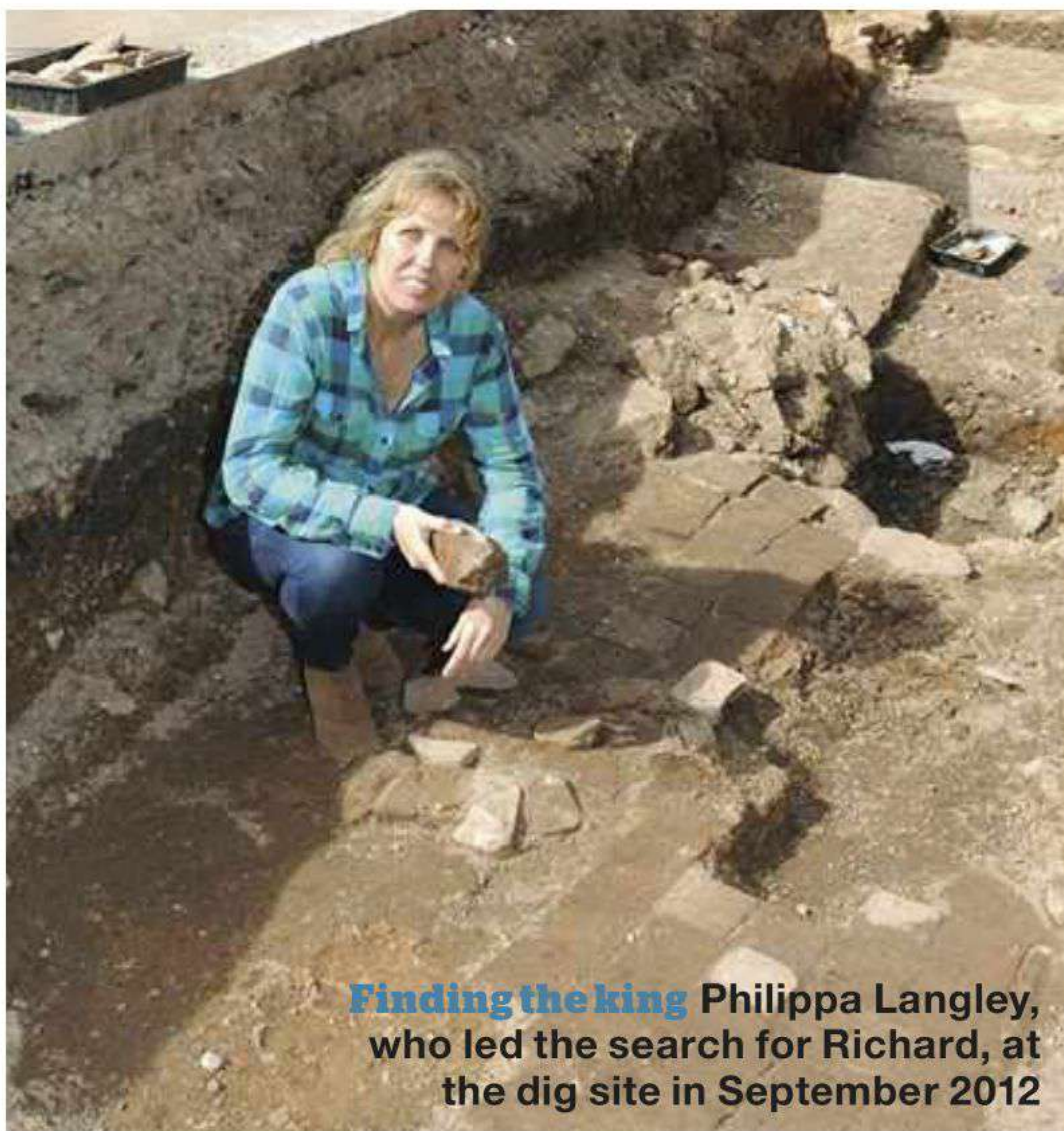
“Finding the king’s remains doesn’t answer the big questions, but it does – with the real scoliosis, to set against the reputed hunchback – suggest there may often be a grain of truth lurking inside the old stories. Also, the catalogue of wounds or posthumous ‘humiliation injuries’ Richard suffered gives what has often been missing: an element of human sympathy to his story. Now we need a bit more excavation, in a different sense – of the stories of the women around Richard, from whom derived this all-important DNA.

Sarah Gristwood is the author of *Blood Sisters: The Women Behind the Wars of the Roses* (HarperPress, 2013)



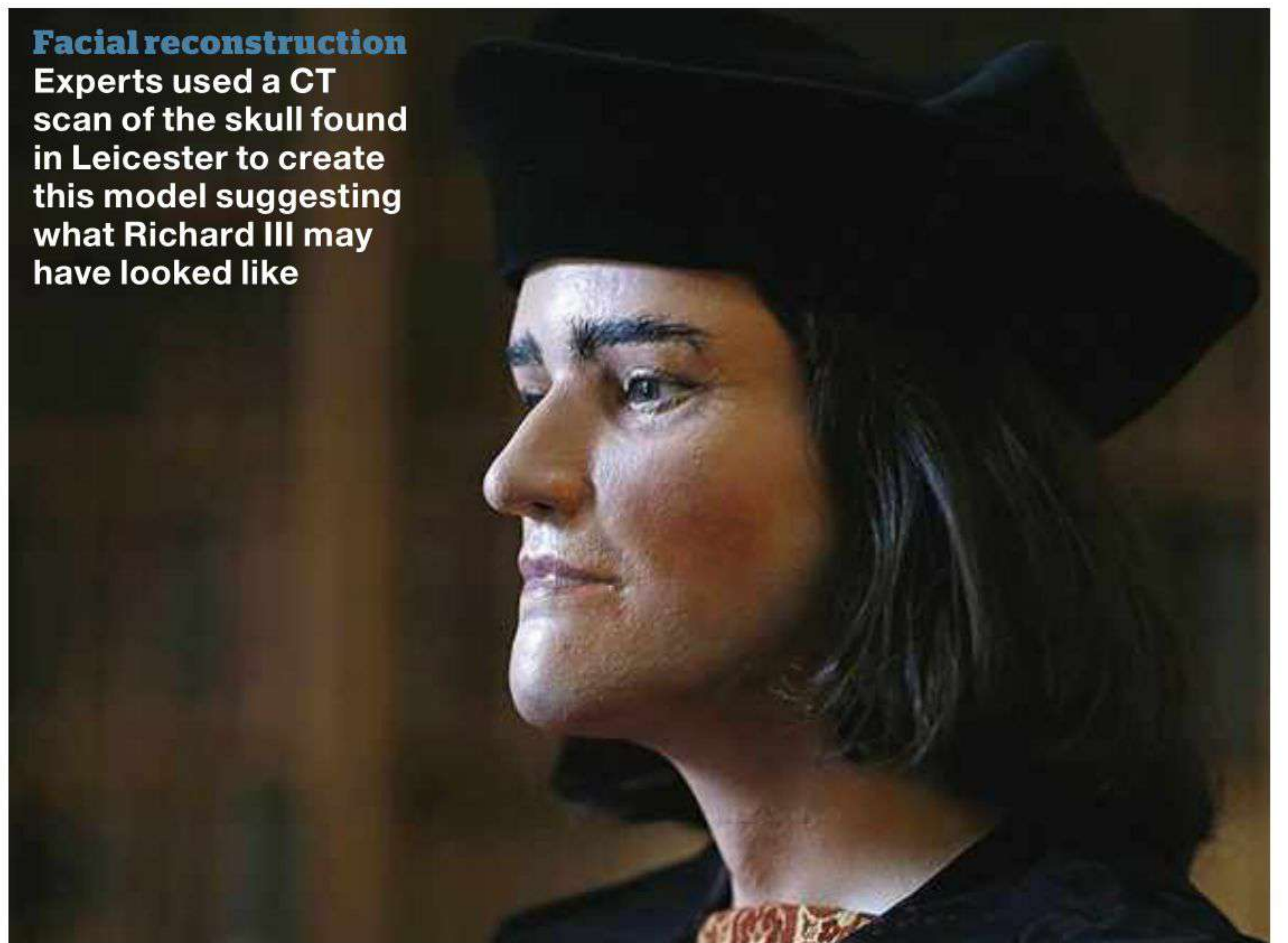
# RICHARD III'S LAST JOURNEY

From hastily dug grave to his upcoming ceremonial burial in Leicester, we trace the king's discovery in pictures



**Finding the king** Philippa Langley, who led the search for Richard, at the dig site in September 2012

**Facial reconstruction** Experts used a CT scan of the skull found in Leicester to create this model suggesting what Richard III may have looked like



UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER/ALAMY/CORBIS

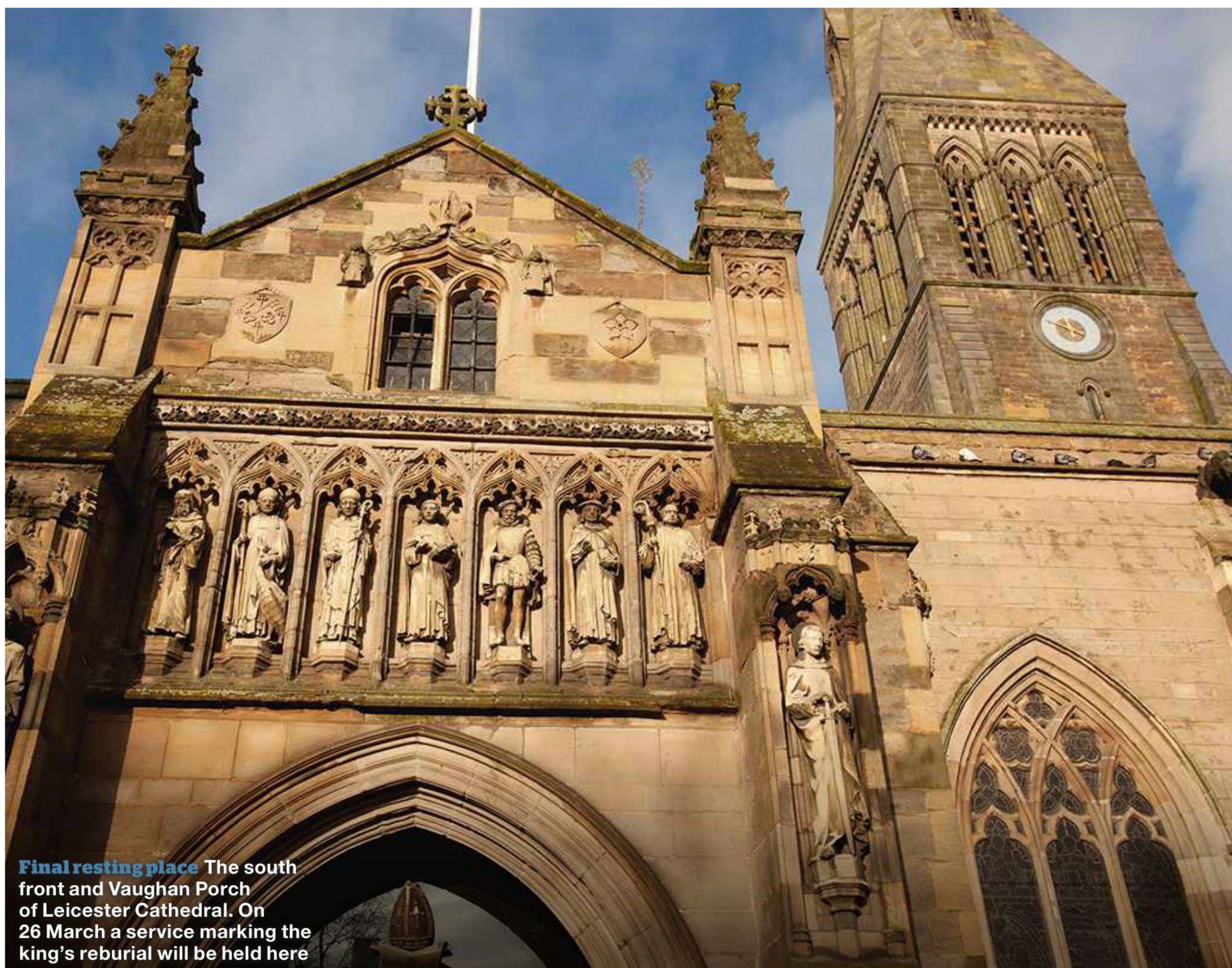


**Royal opening** The King Richard III Visitor Centre in Leicester, which opened in July 2014. The discovery of the king's remains is estimated to have boosted the city's economy by around £45m



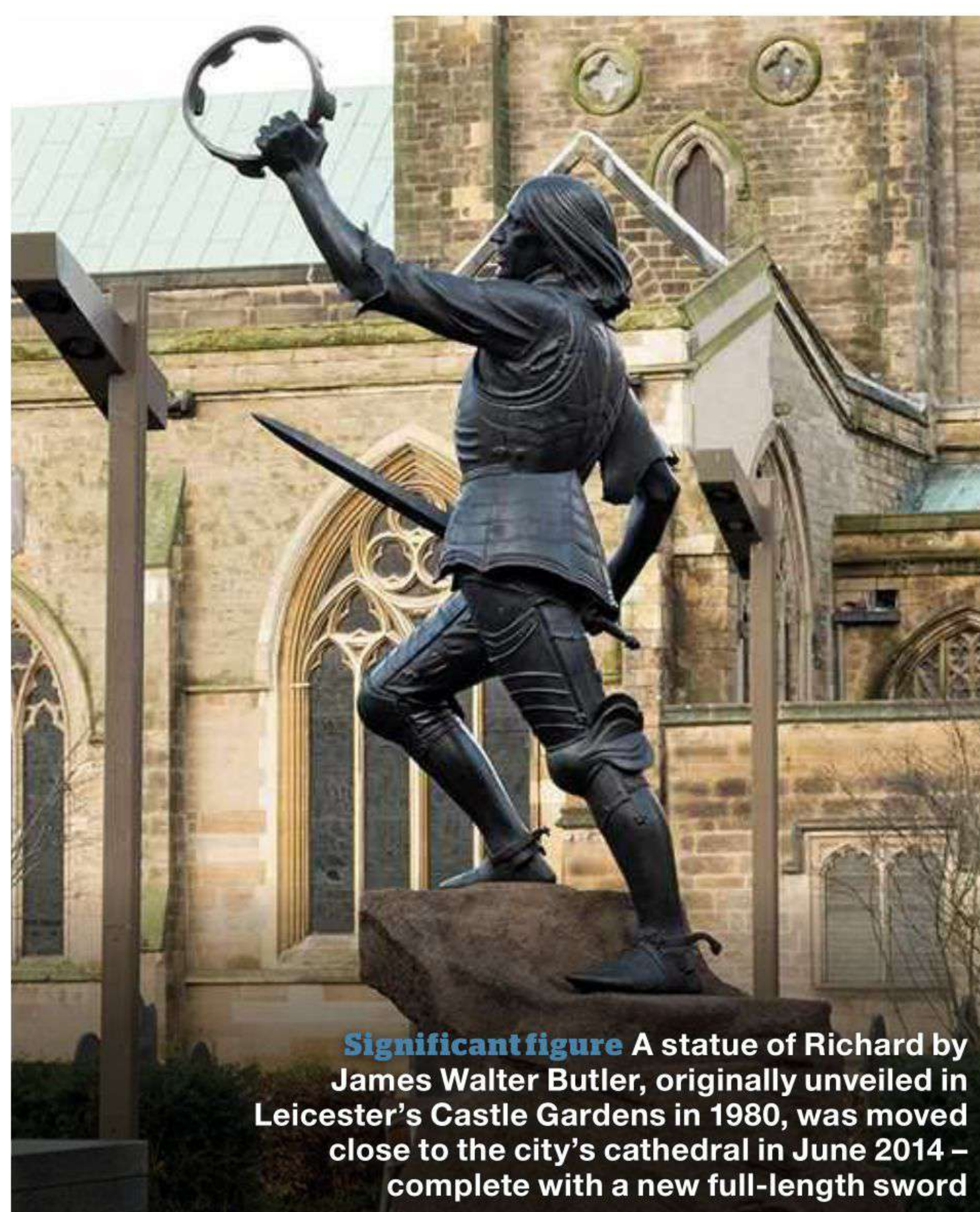
**Regal replica** An exact copy of the skeleton found in Leicester, created using 3D printing technology, on display at the new visitor centre





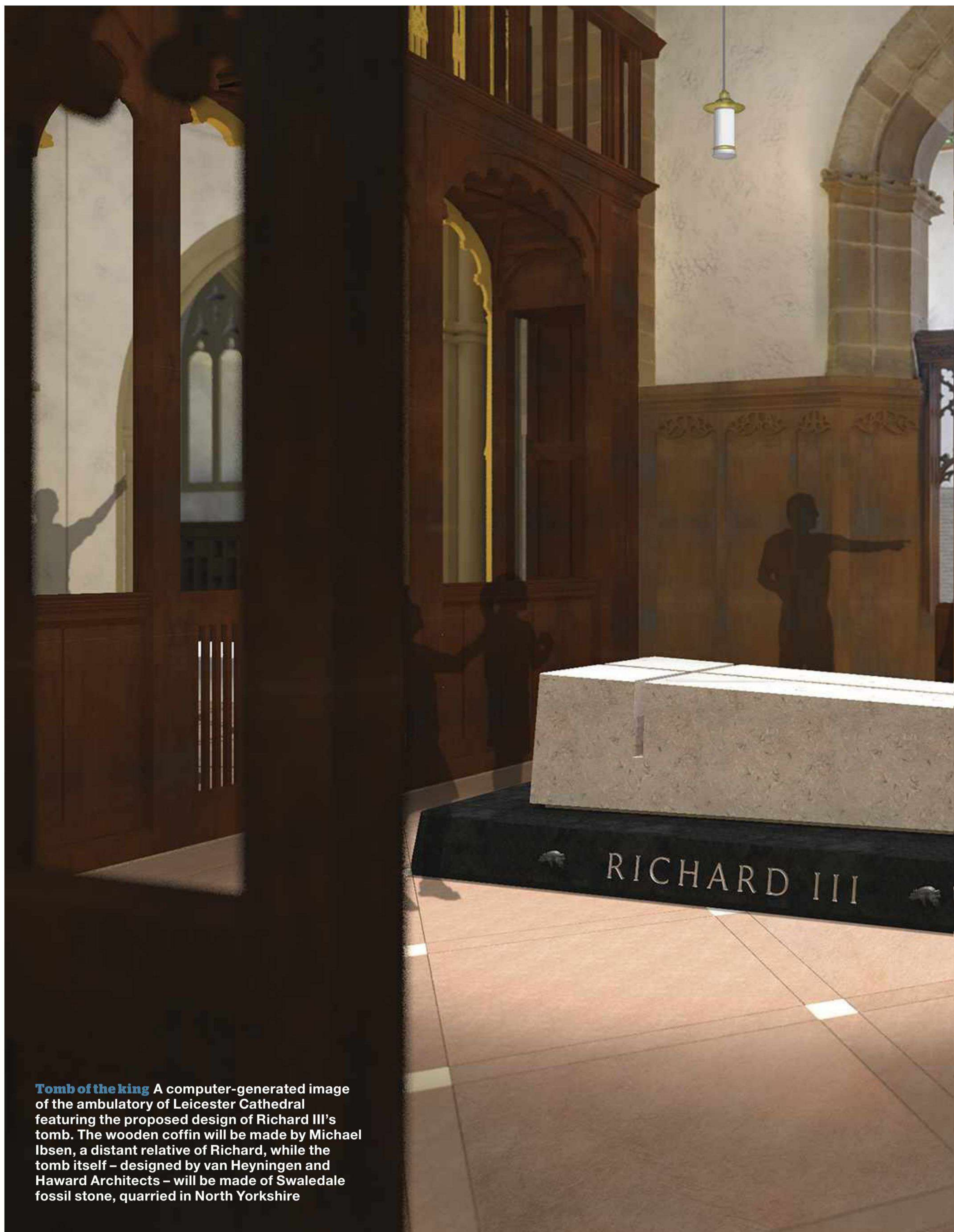
**Final resting place** The south front and Vaughan Porch of Leicester Cathedral. On 26 March a service marking the king's reburial will be held here

ALAMY/GETTY



**Significant figure** A statue of Richard by James Walter Butler, originally unveiled in Leicester's Castle Gardens in 1980, was moved close to the city's cathedral in June 2014 – complete with a new full-length sword





**Tomb of the king** A computer-generated image of the ambulatory of Leicester Cathedral featuring the proposed design of Richard III's tomb. The wooden coffin will be made by Michael Ibsen, a distant relative of Richard, while the tomb itself – designed by van Heyningen and Haward Architects – will be made of Swaledale fossil stone, quarried in North Yorkshire







**GRAVE DOUBTS** This skeleton has been identified as that of Richard III, yet Michael Hicks has concerns about the validity of the claim. "It's extremely rare that archaeologists find a known individual, let alone a king of England," he says

March 2014

## Was the skeleton in the car park *really* Richard III?

Analysis of the remains found in Leicester in 2012 proved that they belonged to Richard III. Or did it?

**Emma McFarnon's** reports, revisited over the next six pages, track the storm of claims and counter-claims that followed the discovery

**A**rchaeologists "cannot say with any confidence" that bones found in Leicester are those of Richard III, leading experts have claimed.

Speaking exclusively to *BBC History Magazine*, Michael Hicks [then head of history at the University of Winchester] and Martin Biddle, archaeologist and director of the Winchester Research Unit, raised concerns about the DNA testing, radiocarbon dating and damage to the skeleton. Biddle also notes that the team of archaeologists from the University of Leicester is yet to make excavation field records publicly available.

Hicks said he is not convinced that the remains are those of the king. Instead, he argues, they could belong to a victim of

any of the battles fought during the Wars of the Roses, of which the 1485 battle of Bosworth – at which Richard was killed – was the last significant episode.

Though the location of the grave in the former site of the Grey Friars priory matches information provided by John Rous, an associate of Richard's, Hicks notes that "lots of other people who suffered similar wounds could have been buried in the choir of the church where the bones were found". He also queried the project's use of radiocarbon dating, which dated the bones to the period of Richard's death. "Such a technique is imprecise," he said. "It will give you an era, but nothing more. In this case, it covers a period of 80 years."

REX, UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER



Hicks raised concerns, too, about the prominence given to DNA testing in claims about the identity of the remains. “Mitochondrial DNA is traced through the maternal line, and does not change over time,” he said. “Therefore, the DNA match from the Leicester skeleton could equally be the result of the bones being those of someone descended in the female line from Richard’s mother, Cecily Neville, including her two daughters. It could also be those traceable from the other daughters of Cecily’s mother, Joan Beaufort, any daughters of her grandmother Katherine Swynford, and so on.

“Joan Beaufort had 16 children, which made her the ancestor of much of the nobility of the Wars of the Roses – quite a few of whom died violently in those conflicts. There is some scientific debate about the accuracy of matching mitochondrial DNA in this way, but even if it is precise in this case, I’d argue it does not pinpoint these bones as Richard’s.

“I’m not saying that it’s *not* Richard – it’s perfectly conceivable that it is – but we are not in a position to say with any confidence that it’s him. Similarly, while the curved spine suggests the skeleton is Richard’s, the presence of scoliosis does not represent conclusive proof. Indeed, it is very hard to prove that the skeleton belongs to a specific person. The Leicester team themselves acknowledge that it’s extremely rare for archaeologists to find a known individual, let alone a king.”

Professor Biddle, emeritus fellow of medieval archaeology at the University of Oxford, also raised concerns. “While some evidence has been presented in peer-reviewed journals, it’s the field records from the dig we need to see,” he said. “I asked in a letter to *The Times* in 2012 for details about the shape and size of the grave pit but, as far as I know, this material is still not in the public domain.

“The skull was damaged during the excavations, and was later replaced more or less where it seemed to have been. Yet it is a cardinal rule of burial excavation that everything is left in position until the whole body has been uncovered. And, while the excavators say the feet were removed by an undefined Victorian disturbance, anyone viewing the Channel 4 documentary on the dig will see that the lower legs were hit and moved by a mechanical digger.



**THE BIG REVEAL** On 4 February 2013, experts at the University of Leicester – including Jo Appleby, shown here – confirmed that the disinterred bones are Richard’s

“It’s perfectly conceivable the skeleton is Richard III, but we are not in a position to say with any confidence that it’s him

**MICHAEL HICKS**

“We also know very little about the graves in the east end of the church. How many burials were made there in the three centuries of the friary’s existence and, indeed, after the battle of Bosworth? Without further excavation there is no way of knowing, and hence no certainty about the burial that it has been claimed was that of Richard III. Before all this goes any further, it would be wise to be certain the body really is his. Something akin to a coroner’s court should be set up to consider all the evidence.”

Philippa Langley, who commissioned and paid for the excavation, spoke to *BBC History Magazine* in response to Hicks’ comments. She said: “Taking a sceptical view is good for vigorous debate, but to say it cannot be claimed ‘with any confidence’ that this is Richard is quite puzzling. Given

the totality of the evidence, it can surely be said with considerable confidence. Hicks says that there may have been ‘lots of people with similar wounds’. Perhaps he could name one who fits the bill?”

A spokesperson from the University of Leicester said: “The identification was made by combining different lines of evidence. These include the fact that the location of the grave matches the information provided by John Rous, and that the nature of the skeleton – the age of the man, his build, injuries and scoliosis – is in agreement with historical accounts. Biddle suggests that the skeleton’s feet were damaged during the dig, but as they were not in the grave when we found it there *must* have been a prior disturbance.

“The radiocarbon dating places the skeleton to the period of Richard’s death, and while the nature of his burial and grave is highly unusual for Leicester at the time, it fits with the known facts. Two direct female-line descendants of Richard’s sister, Anne, were also found to share a rare mitochondrial DNA type with the skeletal remains.

“The strength of the identification is that different kinds of evidence all point to the same result. Hicks is entitled to his views, but we would challenge and counter them. Our forthcoming papers will demonstrate that many of his assumptions are incorrect. Our field records are also set to become available, as is normal procedure.”



# The controversy continues...

**April 2014**

## Leicester skeleton is Richard III's, leading archaeologist insists

**A**ll evidence backs the assertion that the Leicester skeleton belonged to Richard III, archeologist Mike Pitts has said.

The editor of *British Archaeology* insisted that, taken together, the DNA testing, radiocarbon dating and damage to the skeleton show that the remains belong to the former king.

"Cumulatively, the evidence makes a very convincing case," he said. "We cannot be 100 per cent certain that it's him. There has to be – in any historical situation – an element of doubt. But sometimes we recognise that the doubt is so small that it's insignificant. For all practical purposes, we can say that the skeleton is Richard III's."

Pitts made his comments in response to doubts about the identity of the Leicester skeleton raised by Michael Hicks [then head of history at the University of Winchester] and Martin Biddle, archaeologist and director of the Winchester Research Unit. Speaking to *BBC History Magazine*, the pair raised concerns about tests carried out on the skeleton, and called for field records to be made publicly available (see page 103).

Pitts, a leading archaeologist and the author of *Digging for Richard III: How Archaeology Found the King* (Thames and Hudson, 2014), continued: "We need to look at the bigger picture, and that's something I think Hicks and Biddle fail to do."

"If you were to take just the DNA, or just the radiocarbon dating, or just the location of the grave, then no one of those, I think, is going to be sufficient to prove the identity of the remains. You cannot build up a strong case with even two or three of these strands of evidence."

"But if you add everything together – and there are many, quite different, types of evidence – it all points to the

skeleton being Richard's."

Considering the radiocarbon dating, which dates the bones to the period of Richard's death but covers a time span of 85 years, Pitts said: "The radiocarbon date range is still relevant, because it excludes a vast number of individuals – and of course what it doesn't do is suggest the body was not Richard's."

"It's the right 85 years. And the skeleton is a male, of the right age to be Richard. This in itself does not prove it's him, but it's consistent with it being him. Likewise, the scoliosis seems to fit quite precisely with what we know about Richard's condition. And the reconstruction of his face matches near-contemporary portraits of him."

"Plus, the wounds found on the skeleton are distinctive. They are quite different from wounds suffered by men who died at the battle of Towton, and whose remains have also been examined by archaeologists."

"As a group, the Towton men look like soldiers: nine of the 28 had healed skull traumas from earlier conflict. When they died, many of the wounds they suffered were to arms and hands, sustained where they had tried to defend themselves from attack."

"The Leicester skeleton, by contrast, has no healed wounds – the man had either not fought before, or he had worn armour that only the very wealthy could afford."

"He was killed by savage blows to the back of the head, yet there are no signs that he defended himself. The killing was more like an execution than the frenzied slaughter of Towton."

"Finally, texts say that Richard died from blows to the head. A contemporary poet actually says that a Welsh soldier 'shaved his head' – a fair description of what could have caused one of the skeleton's wounds."

"The DNA alone can not prove that the remains belong to Richard, but it's hugely supportive evidence. I think Hicks overestimates the number of people it could relate to. The DNA is quite precise, and is backed up by so much other stuff."

"When you take all these things together, there's far too much [evidence] to be a coincidence."

Discussing the field records, which Biddle has called to be made publicly available, Pitts said: "I quite understand that Biddle wants to see more evidence from the excavation, but to be fair to Leicester it's less than two years since the excavation, and just over a year since they confirmed the identity of the skeleton – not long, in archaeological terms. It does take time to analyse these results."

"And while I appreciate Biddle's concerns about the mechanical digger [Biddle claimed that the lower legs of the skeleton were hit and moved by a digger], in reality damage to the bones was trivial – the skeleton's feet had been dug away long before the archaeologists got there. This was a highly competent excavation. It was a great excavation."

"Even if the remains had been hoiked out of the ground completely, we would still be where we are now. That would not have made us doubt whether the skeleton is Richard's. All the key information we have about the individual's identity – age, physique, gender, DNA, diet, scoliosis and wounds – would still have been there."

"And to be fair to Leicester, I would suggest that no one has actually said the skeleton is 100 per cent, set in cast iron, Richard III. At a press conference, Richard Buckley [co-director of

**“No one has actually said the skeleton is 100 per cent, set in cast iron, Richard III. They just said it was him ‘beyond reasonable doubt’**

**MIKE PITTS**



University of Leicester Archaeological Services] said it was Richard, ‘beyond reasonable doubt’. He did not say ‘with 100 per cent certainty’.

“There will always be a degree of reservation, but that’s very small. In the real world, we can say that the remains are Richard’s.”

Responding to Pitt’s comments, Michael Hicks said: “Mike Pitts presents the familiar archaeological case very well. He identifies a series of criteria that are met by Richard III, but each can apply to others.

“The combination is impressive, but not definitive. Richard remains the most likely candidate, but possibilities or probabilities are not to be confused with certainties. An absence of evidence does not equal no evidence. ‘Beyond reasonable doubt’ is insufficient if conclusions about Richard are to be drawn from this skeleton.”

Meanwhile, Martin Biddle, referring to Pitts’ suggestion that “Everything ... points to the skeleton being Richard’s,” said: “This is premature. We do not have peer reviews of the DNA results. The carbon-14 dates, age and damage could apply to anyone killed in battle at the time.

“The documentary evidence for Richard’s burial is not strictly contemporary, and refers only to Richard: such sources characteristically omit reference to people of lesser importance.

“Why does the grave not lie on the centre-line of the choir, the appropriate position for a special burial? Does this reflect hasty interment without shroud or coffin in too short a pit? If so, let us see detailed evidence for the pit’s shape, and the horizontal and vertical position, and attitude of the body within it.

“As for scoliosis, the photograph of the skeleton in the April issue of *BBC History Magazine* is misleading: the layout is anatomical [represents the skeleton rather than the position of the body in the ground] except for the curve and spacing of the vertebrae. What would it look like if the vertebrae were anatomically positioned? The body could be Richard’s, but to claim ‘beyond reasonable doubt’ it is his is not justified by the evidence available.”



**ROYAL RESTING PLACE** The dig at the Leicester council car park continued into 2013, after the skeleton claimed to be Richard III was discovered

**December 2014**

## New DNA study “confirms 99.999%” that Leicester skeleton is Richard III

**A**ccording to researchers at the University of Leicester, the latest analysis of all available evidence “confirms identity of King Richard III to the point of 99.999 per cent at its most conservative”.

The researchers collected DNA from living relatives of Richard III and analysed several genetic markers, including the complete mitochondrial genomes inherited through the maternal line and Y-chromosomal markers inherited through the paternal line, from both the skeletal remains and the living relatives. The mitochondrial genome shows a genetic match between the skeleton and the maternal line relatives.

From the genetic markers, researchers also concluded that Richard was blue-eyed and probably had blonde hair, at least during his childhood. This means the portrait that most accurately depicts the former king is the Arched-Frame Portrait in the

Society of Antiquaries – one of the earliest portraits of him that survived.

Dr Turi King from the University of Leicester Department of Genetics, who led the research team, said: “Our paper covers all the genetic and genealogical analysis involved in the identification of the remains of Skeleton 1 from the Grey Friars site in Leicester, and is the first to draw together all the strands of evidence to come to a conclusion about the identity of those remains.

“Even with our highly conservative analysis, the evidence is overwhelming that these are indeed the remains of Richard III, thereby closing an over-500-year-old missing person case.”

Richard III expert Chris Skidmore said: “This confirmation that the Leicester skeleton really is that of Richard III is very welcome, and provides us with the proof of the identity beyond any reasonable doubt.

“The new revelations concerning Richard’s appearance demonstrate the



value of this kind of scientific research, and I hope that this pioneering work can be extended to investigate the DNA of other monarchs such as Richard's brother, Edward IV, and that it may be one day used to reveal the identities of the supposed remains of the 'princes in the Tower' held in Westminster Abbey."

Historian and journalist Dan Jones said: "Richard's bones are still yielding fascinating new information about his life and death, even two years after they were unearthed. I don't think many people were quibbling over the fact that the skeleton found in 2012 was Richard's – but if they were, then this latest report sets the matter to rest. The evidence about his eyes and hair colour is intriguing, although I'm afraid they'll have to change the facial reconstruction that was commissioned last year, showing Richard with dark hair and brown eyes."

"Of course, none of this new evidence gets us any closer to solving the real mysteries of Richard's reign – who killed the princes in the Tower, what Richard was really thinking when he usurped the throne, and so on. We'll have to wait for someone to dig up his diaries before we can work those out..."

"But it's still been an astonishing project, and a real credit to the team at the University of Leicester and their colleagues of many disciplines – historians, genealogists, scientists, statisticians and all – from all over the world who have contributed to this project."

"This raises the question: is there a case for exhuming and analysing other eminent or infamous skeletons? It is rather paradoxical that, in a relatively secular age when we are better equipped to study historical remains than ever, we are so squeamish and prissy about meddling with the dead."

"Wouldn't we like to have a look inside that urn in Westminster Abbey containing the supposed remains of the princes in the Tower? Or to stick a camera inside Elizabeth I's tomb? In the 18th century, tomb-raiding was all the rage. It is such a shame that it has gone out of ethical fashion at a time when we would be better equipped than ever to glean new information from these long-dead bones."

**December 2014**

## Latest DNA study "doesn't prove bones belong to former king"

**M**ichael Hicks, the recently retired head of history at the University of Winchester, has said that the new genealogical research "does not carry us any further forward".

The University of Leicester today [2 December 2014] announced that its latest analysis of all available evidence "confirms identity of King Richard III to the point of 99.999 per cent at its most conservative". [See the previous article for details of the DNA analysis that contributed to this conclusion.]

However, Hicks said in response to the findings: "My line has always been that the bones may be Richard III's, but they cannot yet be proven to be. That is still the case, and is not altered [by this research]."

"The latest announcement is positive in that the bones are now linked to these two descendants of Richard's sister Anne. We did not know that, but we had rather presumed this was so."

"However, I don't think this research carries us any further forward. It tells us that the two modern relatives share the same mitochondrial DNA as the bones, not that the bones belong to Richard III."

"Mitochondrial DNA is traced through the maternal line, and does not change over time. Richard III shared mitochondrial DNA with anyone in the direct female line from his sisters, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great-

grandmother etc. His mother had at least four sisters, leaving female descendants, Richard's great-grandmother and others before her currently unidentifiable."

"There are two further problems with this data that cast doubt on its validity. The first is that the Y chromosome of the male line of the Plantagenets, represented by the Duke of Beaufort, should match with Richard III [and it didn't]. There seems to be an assumption here that a break in the direct male line must be in the Duke of Beaufort's family rather than in Richard's. Why not vice-versa?"

If the break is in Richard's ancestry, then Hicks believes it could have "massive implications for the legitimacy of all English monarchs since Henry VII".

Hicks added: "To clarify: one of the matches the researchers were seeking was between the Y chromosome from the bones and the Y chromosome of the male line of the Plantagenets, which today is represented by the Somerset family, including the Duke of Beaufort. He is descended via the bastard Charles Somerset from the Beaufort issue of John of Gaunt and thus Edward III. They did the test with various Somersets, which did not match the bones."

"[The University of] Leicester seems to say that the DNA from the bones are right, and that the Somerset line must have been broken by an illegitimacy."

“My line has always been that the bones may be Richard III's, but they cannot yet be proven to be. That is still the case, and is not altered by this research

**MICHAEL HICKS**



**ALL IN THE GENES** Analysis comparing DNA from the disinterred skeleton with living relatives of the last Plantagenet king apparently “confirms identity of King Richard III to the point of 99.999 per cent” – but not everyone is convinced



I thought the reverse as likely.”

Hicks was disappointed that the article itself, which was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Nature Communications*, considered the possibilities that there was a paternity break in the ancestors of either Richard III or the Beauforts but did not seriously entertain the idea that the skeleton might be someone other than King Richard.

“It is perfectly possible to match in the female line,” Hicks continued. “There must be dozens of Richard’s contemporaries who do that – but not in the male line. Such persons, of course, are not Richard III.

“The second problem is that we know what Richard looked like from the numerous portraits – black hair and brown eyes. I have previously criticised the reconstruction bust because, although the facial features may be scientific reconstructions from the skull, the colouring cannot be, and must have come from the portraits.

“The suggestion that Richard was fair haired and blue eyed in his youth

suggests that the DNA of the skeleton does not match the evidence of the best known portraits. Again, the assumption seems to be that the bones are Richard’s – therefore the portrait that best fits the DNA results should be selected.”

Genealogy expert Professor Kevin Schürer, from the University of Leicester, said: “The fact that we have a break means just that – we have a break. It doesn’t mean that the skeleton isn’t Richard, because what we have is the very strong evidence triangulated with two living-day relatives, with the mitochondrial DNA, so that in itself is very strong, compelling evidence that the skeleton is Richard III.

“The break, however, does raise other questions – more of a historical nature than ‘is this skeleton Richard?’ This asks questions about the Plantagenets, and indeed the claims to the throne of both the houses of York and Lancaster. **H**

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**Emma McFarnon** is the website editor of *BBC History Magazine*

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### ONLINE

► For our **full online Richard III coverage**, including a gallery of the Leicester site, a look at what the king’s diet may have been and more, visit [historyextra.com/category/topics/kings-queens/richard-iii](http://historyextra.com/category/topics/kings-queens/richard-iii)

##### ON THE PODCAST

► **Dan Jones talks to Suzannah Lipscomb** about Richard III and the Wars of the Roses  
[historyextra.com/podcast/tudors/fresh-views-wars-roses](http://historyextra.com/podcast/tudors/fresh-views-wars-roses)

► The University of Leicester’s Lin Foxhall and Phil Stone from The Richard III Society **react to the discovery of the bones** in 2013  
[historyextra.com/podcast/richard-iii-special](http://historyextra.com/podcast/richard-iii-special)



# HOW TO REBURY A KING

Richard's remains will be laid to rest in March – 530 years after he was first interred. **Alexandra Buckle**, whose research helped prepare the ceremony, reveals what the service will involve

When Margaret Holland, Duchess of Clarence, died in 1439, she was laid to rest flanked by her two husbands in a highly elaborate, partially rebuilt chapel at Canterbury Cathedral. Costing more than £300,000 in today's money, her triple tomb is the only one known to commemorate a woman and her two husbands.

The men lying beside her are her first and second husbands: John Beaufort, 1st Earl of Somerset, and Thomas of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Clarence. Holland outlived both, and arranged for them to be exhumed from their graves in the cathedral and reburied either side of her. A month after her death, her nephew, King Henry VI, intervened to ensure that all went to plan, commanding: "ye wil doo your diligence to see that the said bodies be exhumed & in the place therefore disposed entered after thentent & ordinaunce of our said Aunte." It's no surprise that her wishes were met.

Several things are striking about this example of reburial: the triple tomb, the building of a new chapel in which it was to be housed, and its place within England's most important church – not to mention the royal involvement. The case also tells us a huge amount about the 15th-century vogue for reburials, illustrating how high-profile these ceremonies were, and the wealth and social standing of the people involved.

Reburying the remains of the deceased after their first funeral became a popular practice among the elite. Kings and nobles – together with a few aspirational members of the middle class – used reburial rites for several reasons: political gain, to keep the individual in the memories of the living, to remind society of their family's eminence, and to secure the best possible resting place.

Most 15th-century kings were involved in such reburials. Henry V reinterred Richard II at the start of the former's reign; near the end of the century, Richard III reburied Henry VI. Nobles got involved, too: the dukes of York and Clarence and Norfolk, as well as the earls of Suffolk and Warwick – to name but a few – engaged in such ceremonies as organisers or recipients.

Until recently, little was known about such reburials. The only case to receive even moderate attention was the reburial of Richard III's father, Richard, Duke of York, in 1476. This attention seems mainly due to the extravagance of the nine-day procession, during which his remains were removed



Margaret Holland's unusual 15th-century tomb features an effigy of herself between her two husbands

ROEL RENMANS



“Richard III will finally be reburied in a ceremony that he witnessed in life but, **till now, had been denied in death**”

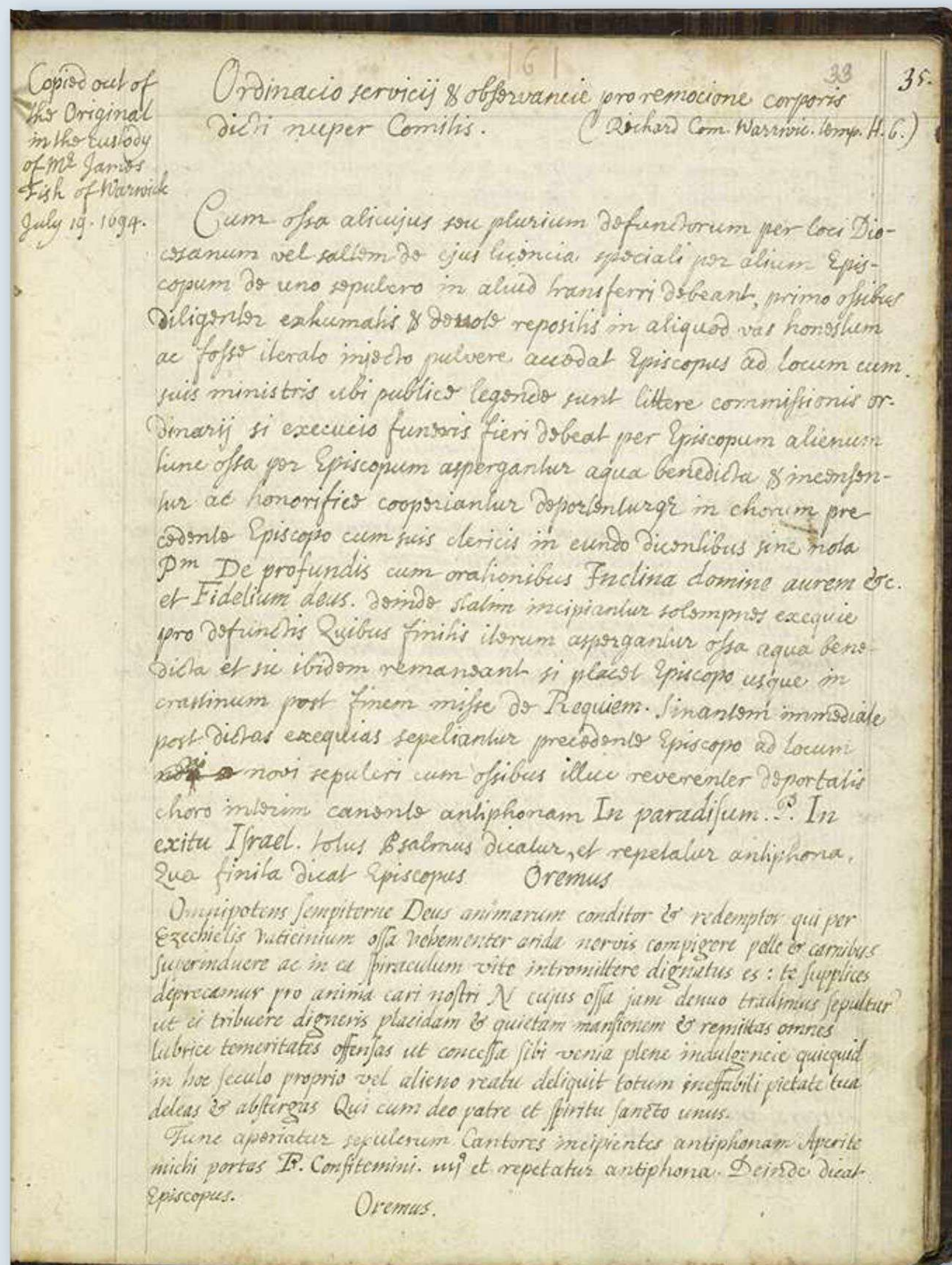
from Pontefract Priory to the family mausoleum at St Mary and All Saints, Fotheringhay. It was an elaborate affair, culminating in a feast for 1,500 guests. We know important details about the ceremony’s masses, sermons and vestments, as well as the mourners who attended. However, even in this instance we did not know much about the actual ceremony. As with other such examples, it remained shrouded in historical mystery.

All that changed in late 2009 when, as a research student at the University of Oxford, I stumbled upon a 17th-century copy of a long-forgotten 15th-century manuscript in the British Library. Though physically unassuming, its contents include the only surviving account of a medieval reburial ceremony. It documents the music, prayers, how the bones were to be treated, what the clergy should say and even where they should stand. It also gives the order of events, from initial prayers and preparation of the bones to the all-night vigil and requiem mass before the reburial the next day.

What it describes is an elaborate and theatrical service, comprising a fascinating combination of elements still used in funerals today – including the committal rite: “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust...” – and unique elements, prayers not known to exist in any other medieval liturgy. Even more importantly, the manuscript describes a general service of reburial from 1475 that was representative of those used around England for the great, the good and, of course, the not so good. This manuscript provides the first insight into what a medieval reburial ceremony for nobles and kings of the day actually involved.

This find has only recently gained prominence following the discovery of Richard III’s remains under a car park in Leicester. Indeed, the document has helped shape the ceremony to be performed at the reburial of the king’s remains in March.

Changes have had to be made to the original medieval service, of course. Modern hymns and music have been inserted, the prayers are now in English rather than Latin, and the rite has been significantly trimmed



**This 17th-century copy of a 15th-century manuscript, found in the British Library, offers the only known account of a medieval reburial ceremony – from the prayers and music to how the bones should be treated**

from a two-day event to a 50-minute service. However, enough has been retained that the present reburial would be recognisable to those who attended ceremonies Richard III would have organised and attended.

I am a member of the committee organising Richard’s reinterment and, in many of our meetings at Leicester, we have discussed the difficulties inherent in mourning a man whom we have come to know largely through legend. Richard died 500 years ago, and professed a very different kind of Christian faith. We have also grappled with the difficulties of trying to make a forgotten ceremony intelligible to those attending in person or watching on television.

Despite these modern difficulties, there is something deeply moving about the events planned for the day. Just like Holland’s interment, and the other reburials of the

1400s, much time has been spent planning a more meaningful and dignified funeral for Richard than his first. On 26 March, Richard will finally be reburied in a ceremony that he witnessed in life – but, till now, had been denied in death. **H**

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**Dr Alexandra Buckle** is lecturer in medieval music at St Anne’s and St Hilda’s College, Oxford. She has published widely on medieval music and history

#### DISCOVER MORE

##### BOOKS

- **Death and the Noble Body** by Danielle Westerhof (Boydell and Brewer, 2008)
- **The Reburial of Richard Duke of York, 21-30 July 1476** by Anne F Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, with PW Hammond, eds (Richard III Society, 1996)



# “This evidence must be the start, not the last word”

As the remains of Richard III are finally buried in Leicester Cathedral, eight leading experts share their views on what the discovery – and the ensuing debate – have taught us, and look forward to what future research might reveal

STEVE SAYERS

DAN JONES

## “This discovery shows what 21st-century science has to offer historians”

“The wealth of information harvested from Richard III’s bones and grave is amazing, and shows just how much 21st-century science has to offer to historians.

I don’t just mean the DNA work that identified the remains as the king’s. Careful analysis of the skeleton diagnosed Richard’s spinal deformity as idiopathic scoliosis, and told us much about the wounds he suffered at the battle of Bosworth in 1485. We learned that the king probably had blue eyes, and was a blond-haired child. Soil analysis told us he had roundworm in his gut. Dental examination suggests he ground his teeth. Isotope analysis of his ribs revealed that his diet got richer in the later years of his life. It’s

a great interdisciplinary case study – and it offers a tantalising glimpse of what we could learn if we opened other monarchs’ tombs. The 18th- and 19th-century vogue for peering into ancient royal graves is long gone. Yet how much more we could find out today! Paradoxically, at a time when we could know so much about the dead, we have grown incredibly prissy about disturbing them. Shame.

Dan Jones is the author of *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and the Rise of the Tudors* (Faber and Faber, 2014)



BBC History Magazine's Richard III



## PHILIPPA LANGLEY

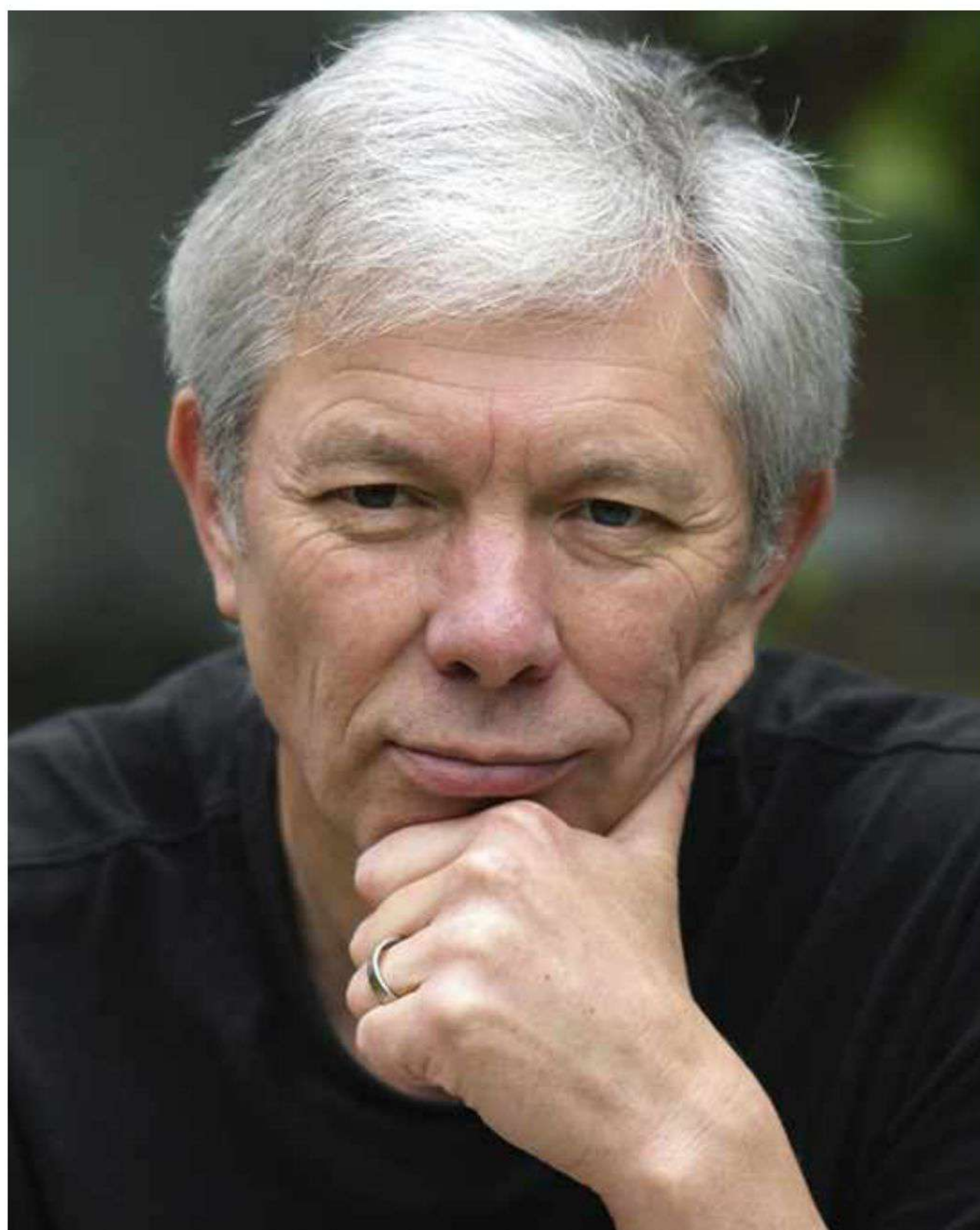
### “We were able to disprove myths that had become truths”

“The Looking For Richard Project began where the study of our past always begins: with open minds and questions. Everyone in Leicester told us that the king’s body had been dug up and thrown into the river Soar; we proved that the age-old story was false, dreamed up to suit a reputation that people had been led to believe. We questioned that reputation, too, by commissioning a psychological analysis of the king by two leading academics, Mark Lansdale and Julian Boon, which is available to read online at [richardiii.net/2\\_6\\_riii\\_psychological.php](http://richardiii.net/2_6_riii_psychological.php).

By questioning, we were able to uncover the real

Richard and disprove many of the myths that surrounded him – myths that had, over time, become ‘truths’. Our years of work brought extraordinary results, demonstrating what can be achieved when preconceptions are set aside. This year we commemorate finding Richard III; who knows what still waits to be discovered? It’s my prediction that the study of late medieval England will never be the same again.

Philippa Langley led the search for Richard III through the Looking for Richard Project, and co-authored (with Michael Jones) *The King’s Grave* (John Murray, 2013)



## MIKE PITTS

### “A distant medieval monarch has been revealed as one of us”

“There was great excitement when archaeologists announced that a king’s remains had been found in Leicester. Many experts, however, were sceptical: what new would we learn? The historian and broadcaster Mary Beard, for instance, wondered on Twitter if the discovery had “any HISTORICAL significance?”

To counter such doubts, we might note the positive, practical outcomes. The Richard III Society, Channel 4, the University of Leicester and the city of Leicester itself, to name but a few of those closely involved, have all benefitted. The university, for example, estimated that immediate press coverage was worth £2m to it. Such

things matter. But we have also gained new insights into Richard and contemporary historical documents. And I think we have understood something greater still. The tawdry details of Richard’s grave, and the immediacy of bones, wounds and dirt, have touched people in ways beyond the reach of history or Shakespeare. Archaeology has made a historical cypher real, and humanised a fictional monster. A distant medieval monarch has been revealed as one of us.

Mike Pitts is the editor of *British Archaeology*, and author of *Digging for Richard III: How Archaeology Found the King* (Thames and Hudson, 2014)





Francis Pryor at Flag Fen near Peterborough. “The Richard III archaeological excavation and historical reconstruction were enormously successful,” he argues

## FRANCIS PRYOR

**“The project was a great achievement for archaeology”**

“The archaeological excavation and the historical reconstruction were enormously successful. They provided splendid examples of close teamwork and showed why archaeology is still the best general training for life after university that any student could hope to acquire. The Richard III project combined so many useful skills: hands-on practical experience, advanced computing and surveying, but also ‘softer’ aspects such as interpretation,

communication, PR and outreach. The project showed well how modern archaeology can bridge the divide between the worlds of art and science better than any other academic subject. All in all, it was a huge achievement and a great advertisement for the expert research being carried out by institutions such as the University of Leicester.

Francis Pryor is the author of *Home: A Time Traveller's Tales from Britain's Prehistory* (Allen Lane, 2014)

## TURI KING

**“We will learn even more in the coming years”**

“The genetic analysis has thrown up some interesting results, showing that there isn't a match with living male-line relatives. This is not particularly surprising given the known possibility of a false paternity (in other words, the biological father is not the recorded father) somewhere in the 19 links in the genealogical chain – though where the break occurred is still not known. We now know that Richard almost certainly had blue eyes and probably light-coloured

hair, at least in childhood, allowing us to show which of the two earliest portraits of Richard most closely matches the genetically predicted results (the ‘Arched-Frame Portrait’ in the Society of Antiquaries of London). As we learn more about which gene or genes may be involved in particular traits, the current whole-genome analysis will allow us to use this knowledge to learn even more about Richard in the coming years.

Dr Turi King is lecturer in genetics and archaeology at the University of Leicester



MARK PINDAR



## PHIL STONE

### “Richard III will be buried with dignity and honour”

“Richard was buried in the Grey Friars with much haste and little honour. It is not known where he wished to be buried, but there has been much debate about the subject. Standard archaeological practice is to rebury remains near where they were found, reflected in the exhumation licence upheld in the High Court. Richard will be buried in Leicester Cathedral, very close to the Grey Friars.

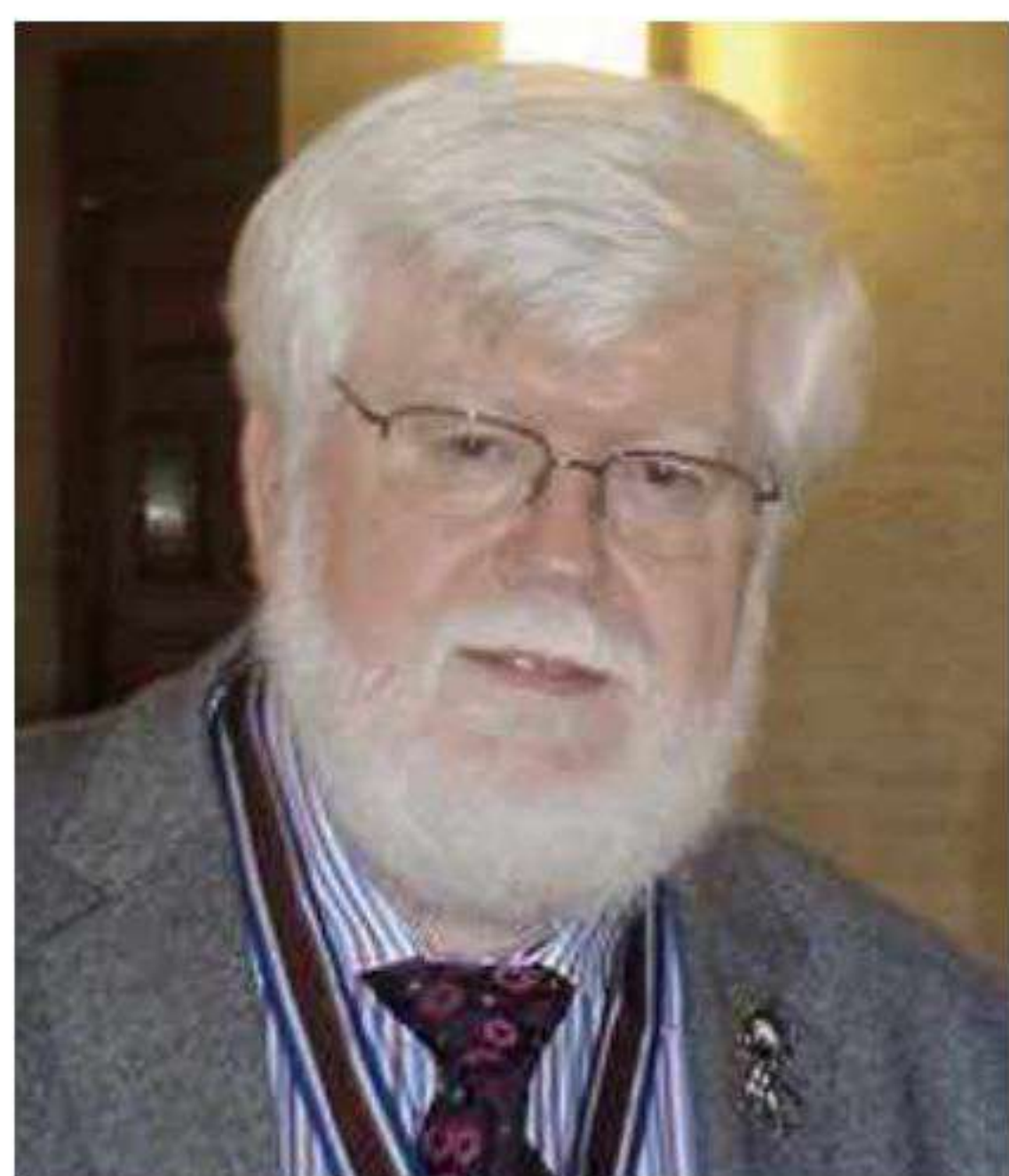
All of the suggested alternatives had drawbacks. The family mausoleum at

Fotheringhay is too small. It is my understanding that the authorities would not give permission for a burial in St George’s Chapel, Windsor, or Westminster Abbey. Besides, there is no room for another burial, especially that of a king.

York Minster was also suggested, as Richard had ordered the building of a chantry there – yet that does not mean that he intended it to be his burial location.

Despite demands to do otherwise, the Richard III Society has maintained impartiality throughout the whole debate. Our stance was that we would work with whichever religious house was chosen in order to ensure that Richard could be buried with dignity, honour and solemnity, giving him what he was denied in 1485. I’m very pleased to say that this is what is to be done.

Phil Stone is chairman of The Richard III Society



## MICHAEL HICKS

### “This quest funded a massive research effort. Yet it failed”

“This quest generated worldwide knowledge of Richard III, of modern science and of Leicester University, funded a massive multi-disciplinary research effort and potentially taught much about Richard and his age. Yet it failed – perhaps because these bones were not Richard’s but those of a non-Plantagenet slain between 1455 and 1530; certainly because the issue was prejudged.

Researchers sought only to confirm the remains as Richard III’s. Suspect radiocarbon dating, discrepancies in the evidence found in the wounds and grave, and contrary Y chromosome

results – all of these were brushed aside.

Much remains unknown – about Richard’s maternal ancestors; mortality in the Wars of the Roses; where the slain from that conflict were buried; the identities of the other internees at the Leicester friary; the incidence of scoliosis; and paternity breaks among late medieval English aristocrats. This cannot be the end of the research.

Michael Hicks is the former head of history at the University of Winchester. For more of his views, see p102



## CHRIS SKIDMORE

### “The controversies surrounding Richard are sure to remain alive for years to come”

“I will never forget the moment when I found out that Richard’s remains had been unearthed beneath a Leicester car park. Sitting at my desk in the sweltering August heat back in 2012, I had nearly finished the first draft of my book on Bosworth when, with BBC News playing in the background, I caught a sight of the ‘breaking news’ banner flashing across the screen. Since then, there seems to have been barely a day when Richard III has been out of the news.

The discovery has revealed much about the final wounds sustained by

Richard during his final moments on the battlefield, in what seems nothing less than a staged execution rather than death by fighting. Scientific tests on the remains have taught us more about Richard’s diet, his eye colour (blue not brown) and that he suffered with roundworm. Perhaps most importantly, we now know that Thomas More was right, and that Richard did have a curved spine, though hardly of ‘hunchback’ proportions. Yet all of this new evidence needs to be the beginning, not the final word, in a reassessment of Richard’s life. And to do this,

the evidence will no longer be found in the ground but in the countless pages of undisturbed documentary evidence lying under our noses in the archives.

Richard is finally to be laid to rest – yet the search for new evidence must continue. I’m confident that the controversies surrounding one of England’s most famous monarchs are sure to remain alive for years to come. ■

Chris Skidmore is the author of *Bosworth: The Birth of the Tudors* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2013)





## Dan Jones on... **Richard's continuing legend**

**“Hi! This is Misty from Florida! I just wanted to say: I had a psychic experience with Richard III, and now I’ve written a book about him...”**

“That was the opening line of a telephone call I received during a live US radio show two years ago. I was in the States promoting my book *The Plantagenets*, which covered the period ending in 1399. But all anyone wanted to talk about during that interview – and pretty much every other interview – was Richard III: the villain of Bosworth, the king in the car park.

Even before those old bones were excavated from land belonging to Leicester council on 5 September 2012, Richard was the most controversial of all the Plantagenet kings. Was he really Shakespeare’s hunchbacked plotter, usurper, murderer, scoundrel? Do we believe Polydore Vergil’s characterisation of Richard – as a man of “short and sour countenance, which seemed to savour of mischief”? Or is that just Tudor propaganda? Did Richard murder the princes in the Tower, or was he the victim of a plot cooked up to discredit him?

Wherever you stood on these matters either before or after the discovery of Richard’s remains, it is clear that the last Plantagenet king has always been someone rather special. People, like my radio caller, who feel a deep, quasi-spiritual connection with Richard – and in many cases a personal duty to defend his memory – are not unusual. Indeed, the Leicester dig would never have happened without someone who felt a strong affiliation with Richard: the writer Philippa Langley, who claims she knew that Richard was buried beneath the car park when she walked over a letter ‘R’ painted on the ground and felt a shiver down her spine.

Some historians have dismissed these people as cranks – amateurs who have overdosed on Josephine Tey’s 1951 novel *The Daughter Of Time*, and whose personal investment in ‘clearing Richard’s name’ represents the opposite of good history. But, clearly, not all Richard enthusiasts are obsessives. Indeed, The Richard III Society, which organises Ricardians worldwide, is a conduit for serious and valuable historical study. Its very existence is a sign that Richard is not just another dead Plantagenet but a historical figure who really matters today. History is a humanity. It is for and of the people. Enthusiasts and popularisers should be welcomed!

And that is where the cult of Ricardianism collides with the academic research that has been undertaken in Leicester during the two and a half years since the

bones were found. Every discovery made by the archaeologists, osteologists, geneticists and dentists who have studied the bones has received immediate and sometimes frenzied worldwide attention. The TV documentaries about the dig earned great ratings and prestigious awards. Historians have sold thousands of books about Richard and his last days. Tourists have flocked to Leicester – and will continue to come once Richard has been reinterred on 26 March in the elegant tomb at the city cathedral.

So, two and a half years after the discovery, we should not just reflect that our understanding of Richard’s life and death has advanced significantly, but also celebrate the fact that this new knowledge has been transmitted so effectively to an eager public.

Yet, of course, there is much that we have not learned – much that we can never learn. Historians can continue to argue until our cheeks puff out about why Richard really usurped the crown from Edward V in 1483. Was it long-hidden personal ambition? Did Richard really believe his nephews were illegitimate? Was he simply backed into a corner, acting in part-sighted desperation?

Likewise, visitors to Westminster Abbey can peer and wonder all they like at the urn, designed by Christopher Wren, that purports to hold the skeletons of the princes in the Tower. Did Richard really order their deaths? Or is this the biggest fit-up job in English history? Are they really the bones of the princes? Or was the pretender Perkin Warbeck actually telling the truth in the 1490s when he claimed to be the younger prince, Richard, Duke of York, somehow alive and at large?

For all that Richard’s skeleton has taught us about his genes, his diet, his medical complaints and his final hours, we are still no closer to solving any of these enduring mysteries. And unless some future archivist suddenly turns up *The Secret Diary Of Richard III Aged 32 3/4*, we are going to have to stick to theorising and arguing among ourselves.

Richard’s bones have been exposed, laid bare and studied, and are soon to be reburied. But still in many regards he remains an enigma. That’s why he will continue to be the object of every type of human obsession, from simple interest to fascination, psychic bonding to displaced love. Richard III can now rest in peace. But his legend continues. **H**

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**Dan Jones** is the author of *The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses and The Rise of The Tudors* (Faber, 2014)



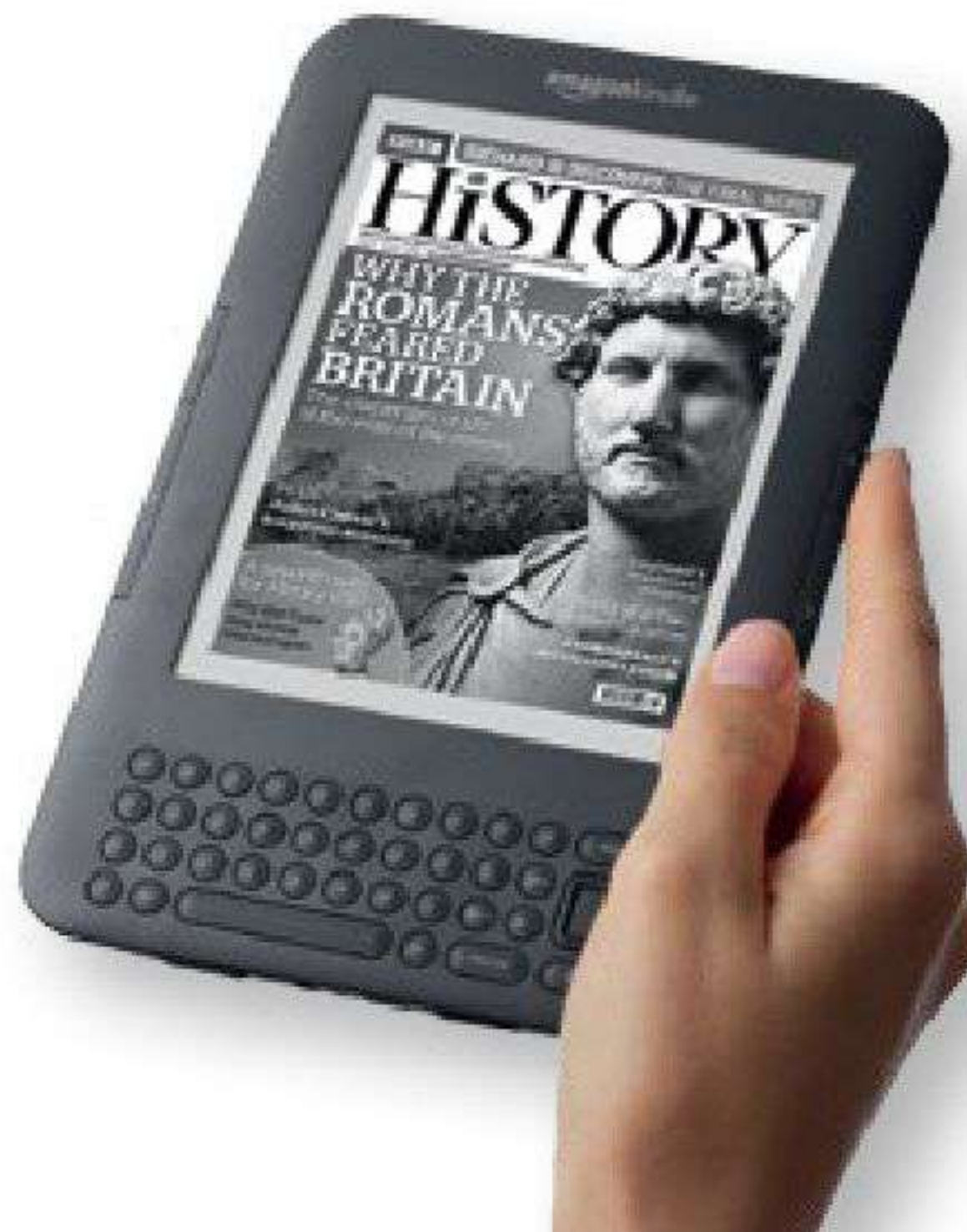
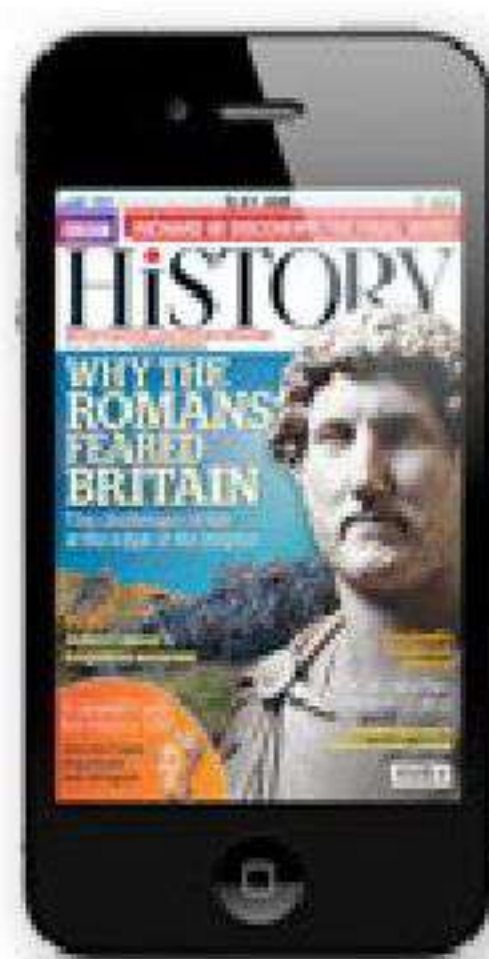
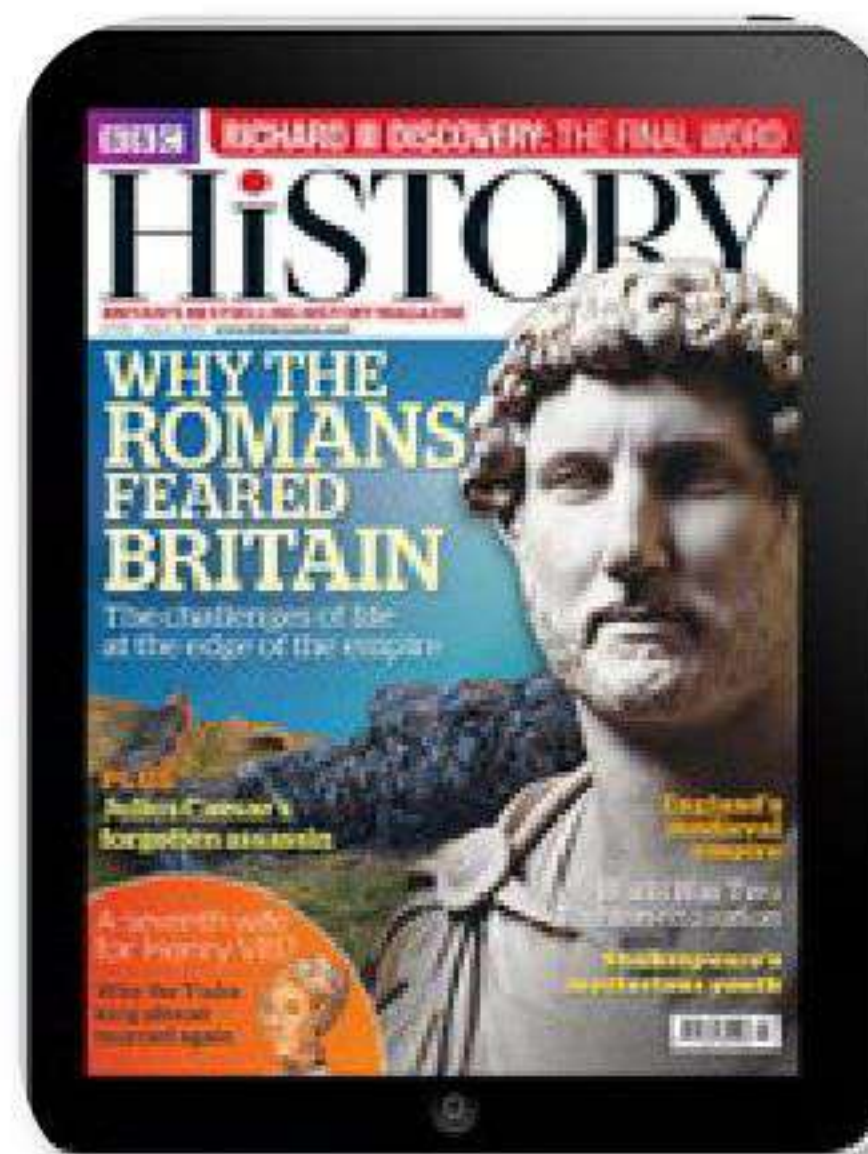
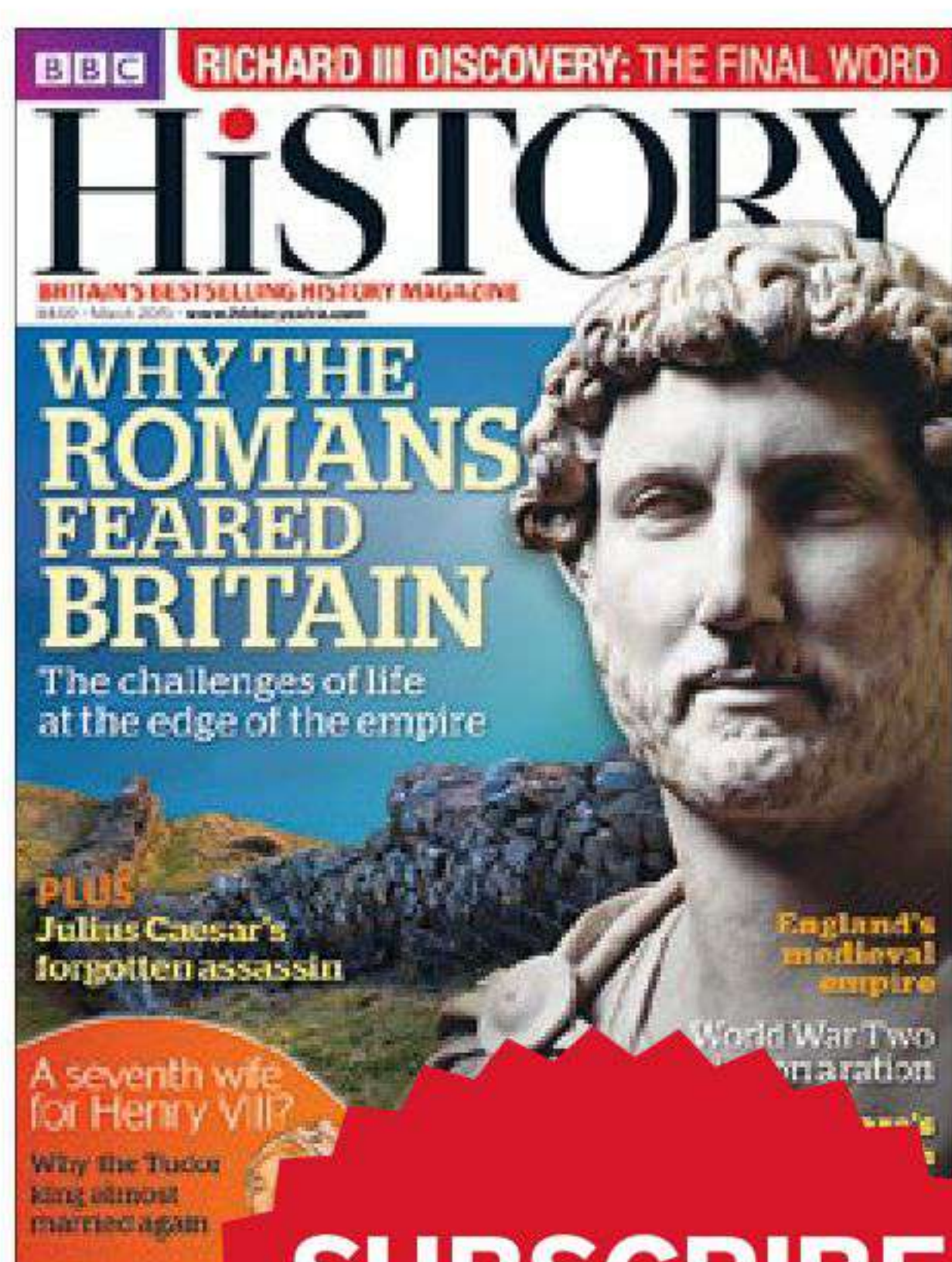


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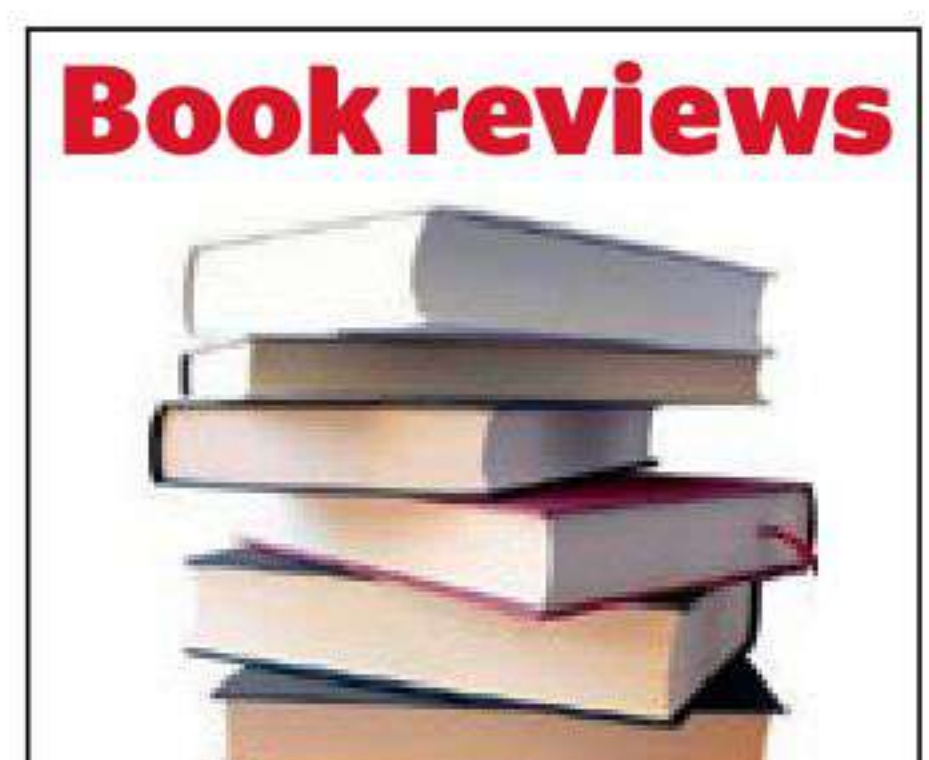
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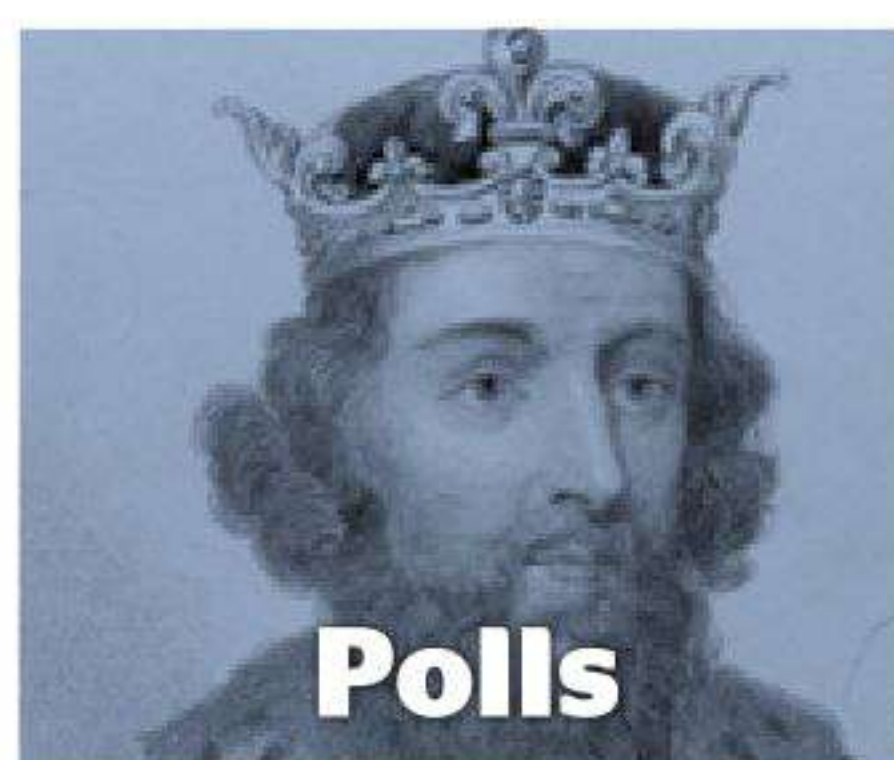
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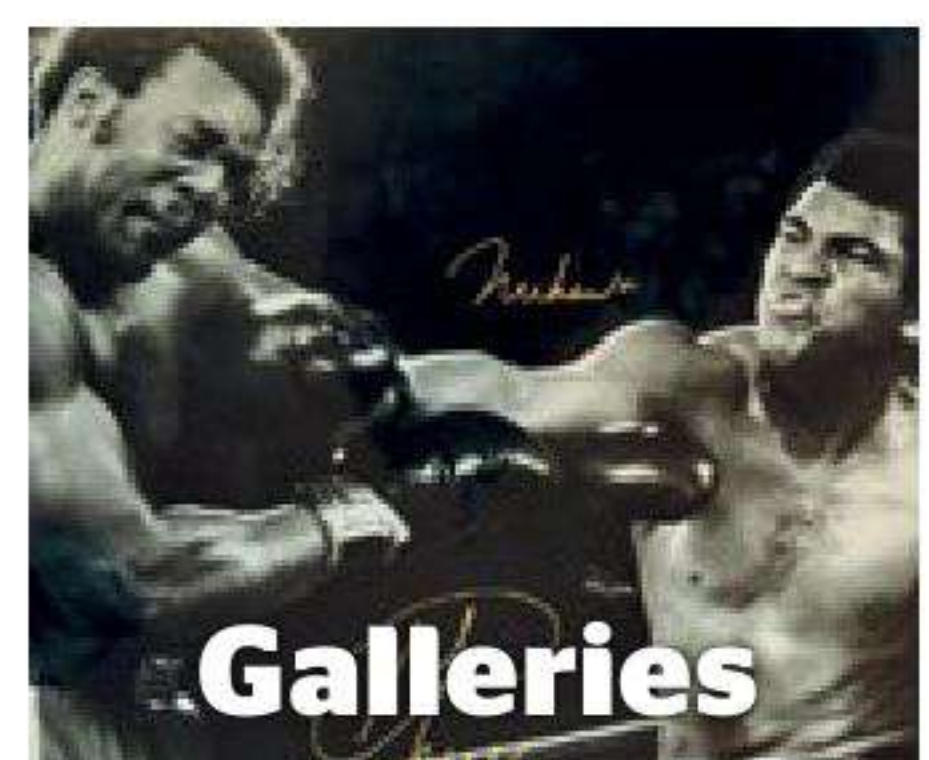
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# RICHARD III

THE FULL STORY OF THE KING UNDER THE CAR PARK



A badge depicting a boar, Richard III's personal emblem, found at the edge of Fen Hole in Leicestershire. Historians believe that it was worn by a knight fighting for the king at the battle of Bosworth, where Richard met his end

FROM THE MAKERS OF  **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE